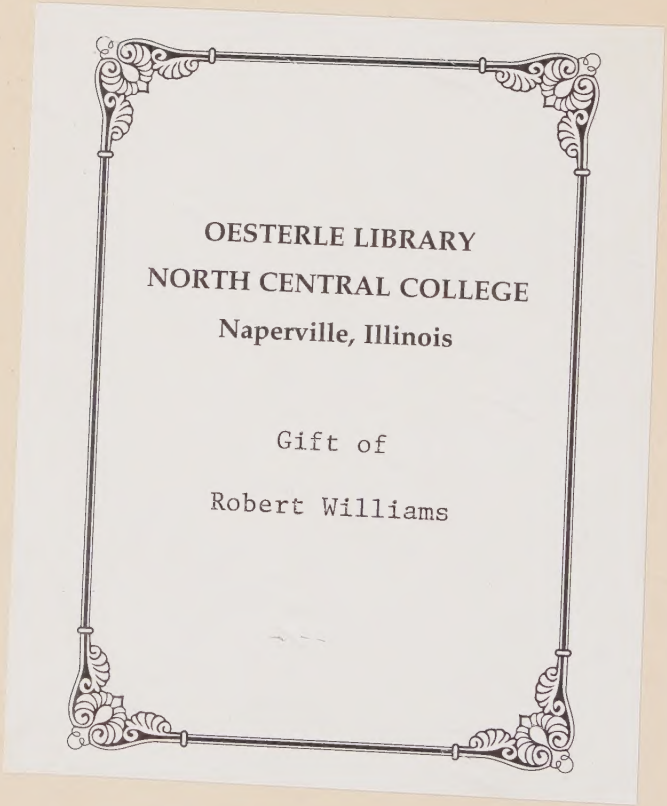
A Little Brother of the Rich

JOSEPH MEDILL PATTERSON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A LITTLE BROTHER OF THE RICH

A NOVEL

BY

JOSEPH MEDILL PATTERSON

CHICAGO

THE REILLY & BRITTON CO.

1908

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SYLVIA ..... Frontispiece

From a painting by Hazel Martyn Trudeau.

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From paintings by Walter Dean Goldbeck.

CHAPTER I

A DEAD ARISTOCRAT

Old Mr. Dunbar was dead, and his wasted body lay stretched out under the coffin glass in the old-fashioned parlor of the old-fashioned country house on the Hudson. A candle at his head and a candle at his feet threw deep shadows from the clumsy, upholstered furniture upon the thick carpet and the heavy, brocaded yellow curtains.

In his youth Mr. Dunbar had been a conspicuous man of fashion; and in his old age he had been wont to sit alone in his library after dinner, a decanter of port at his elbow, musing over the memories of the zenith period of his life when as a young man he had visited the country houses of the older British aristocracy and in climax had achieved an intrigue with a duchess. Until his death, her miniature stood upon his dressing table. The string of pearls he had given her now nightly adorned the fair, un-

clad neck of her American granddaughter-in-law, whose fresh plebeian blood had rejuvenated the vigor, just as her splendid dower had swelled the fortunes, of the noble line.

In his last years the old dandy found few vital prominences to cast their shadows across the memory of his long years in America. Here perhaps he might discern the dim outlines of the starlit broad wooden piazza of the old Grand Union in Saratoga, where he had first avowed himself to that pretty Louisville woman, whose husband afterwards became so inordinately jealous; there stood the Dunbar fancy dress ball on which he had spent half a year's income. It had been famous thirty-five years ago, but now was forgotten by all save him. Yonder was his election to the presidency of the Coaching Club, against Phil Huttoon, whom he had never liked.

But old Mr. Dunbar had lived his youth so that his age was bare and resourceless; and he dragged his days wearily and sated, driving behind his fat horses and drinking his port, to the grave.

Something of the lassitude which charac-

terized the old man was already apparent in his heirs, the two orphaned grandchildren, Katherine and William Ingraham Ducroix Dunbar, known to his class at Yale as "Boozy Billy."

The girl was very tall and very slender, with shadows under her eyes. Her appearance was of over-refinement, inanimateness; she was slightly stooped. She moved with slow indolence, staying most of her time indoors, even during her summer months in the country.

Every Wednesday morning, during the winter season, she went, at an hour before noon, to the recital in Mr. Darlington's darkened studio, where a limited congregation of pale, rich women met to hear the harp, the violin or the flute. Afterward, smoking thin perfumed cigarettes, they sipped Russian tea.

Brother and sister, dressed in new mourning, were sitting with the body of old Mr. Dunbar on the night before the funeral.

"What he left doesn't amount to much nowadays," Billy commented crossly. "We haven't much luck, anyway. Here I am with another year at college, and there you are,

out two years, without a man in sight you can afford to take. We've just got to hang together, old girl, until one of us marries well. Eh?"

He poured out for himself a third glass of his grandfather's old port. The girl was displeased.

"Yes, surely we ought to marry well," she said, "for there is no better family in America. But, Billy, you will hurt your prospects if you don't give up drinking so much. Really."

"Please let up on that, Katherine," he drawled. "Drink has absolutely no hold on me. I take it only for sociability. I can stop like that"—he snapped his fingers—"whenever I want to. And I may add, that I am worried about you, too. If you don't pull yourself together and drop your die-away manner, you'll never get the right man. I tell you what, Kathy," he continued, a darker red creeping into his cheeks and animation entering his voice, "come to the Prom with me next winter. We'll have the box with Carl Wildmerding and Lassie Ellis. You ought to make an impression. Lassie

was taken with you, all right, when he was up here."

"Don't be ridiculous, Billy. In the first place, we'll be in mourning then. Furthermore, when I marry, I want to marry a man, not a child; and, besides, Lassie and I would never get on at all. This year he thinks only of football and rowing. After he graduates it will be race horses and polo ponies, the slaughtering of animals, and what men like him call 'wine suppers' with actresses. I know his type."

The lad poured another glass of port. "Well, he's worth playing, even if he is a long shot. Every other girl in town is after him. Old Harvey Ellis has anywhere between one hundred fifty and two hundred millions right now. And the Lord only knows what he'll have when he dies. He's one of the biggest steel men in the country. Oh, don't interrupt me. I know what you're going to say. What if he is 'common and ordinary'? You're not asked to marry the old rooster, but Lassie; and he'll pass anywhere. He *is* an outdoor man, to be sure, but that's nothing against him."

"His mother kept a boarding house for

common laborers in Duquesne. That is well known," said Katherine, contemptuously.

"Oh, forget it," answered Billy, impatiently. "Everybody else has—eight or ten years ago. You're behind the times. Lassie's the best match left in New York, now that Anita Devereux's got Carl. Why, as a matter of fact, the Wildmerdings aren't such an old family. I suppose grandmother in her younger days would have looked on old Carl Wildmerding II just as you look on Lassie now. But what a bally ass she'd have been if old Carl II had proposed and she'd turned him down. You oughtn't to be so damned particular," he complained, "*Noblesse oblige,* you know."

Katherine laughed with a sneer. "Billy, it seems so much worse for a man to think and talk this way than for a girl, who, after all, has no other way to get along."

"Rot, Kate, pure rot. I simply ask you to come to the Prom with me. Most girls would like the chance to be in the party with Lassie Ellis, with Carl Wildmerding and with Paul Potter, Carl's room-mate, captain of the eleven, a highstand man and the general all-around, little-tin-god-on-wheels of

the campus this year. He's from Indiana and he's poor, but he's really a nice fellow for all that. Come, don't be silly, Kate. You'll have a good time anyway; and the lightning *might* strike Lassie; and then our —your troubles are over."

So and not otherwise, before dawn relieved their vigil, Katherine was persuaded to promise to make herself as charming as possible to Lassiter Ellis at the Yale Promenade dance the following February.

CHAPTER II

HERMES IN FLANNELS

On an afternoon in July a young man and a young girl sat idly in a canoe, slowly drifting between low-lying horse-pastures, upon the muddy waters of one of the upper reaches of the Wabash.

"Come, my Hermes in flannels," she said; "the sun is low. Hurry or it will be dark before we get home."

He took up his paddle and moved it lazily through the water. "And even if it is," said he, "what then?"

"Cold looks followed by hot words for me," she laughed; "and for you—well if you mean to ask father tonight it would be as well to find him in a pleasant mood—and he isn't a bit so when I'm late to supper."

The tall, graceful lad put forth his supple strength, sweeping the canvas craft ahead with long, steady, even strokes. She mar-

veled, as many other people have marveled, at the frictionless accord and perfect harmony of his movements.

"Oh Paul," she exclaimed, suddenly, after a silence, "I am very proud of you—not because you are tall and strong and straight, not because of your mere envelope, but because you, yourself, the inside of you, is fine and purposeful and inspiring. The body after all is but the hired carriage in which the spirit is transferred across the City of Today from the station Past, to the station Future."

She leaned forward as she spoke, interlocking her long, slender, white fingers, breathing out her words with solemn seriousness, almost with rapture; for she was at the age when world-old thoughts seem very wonderfully new.

"I've warned you," he laughed, sending the little turgid whirlpools swirling aft, "against continued over-indulgence in Rosetti, Wordsworth, Emerson and the German poets. Somebody ought to play the hose on this flame of culture that is rolling over our prairie towns, or we'll all be eating canned goods pretty soon. The body is as much a part of us as the soul." The pleasantness

faded from his look, as his memory carried him back to his early days at Yale.

"During my first two terms at college," he went on, slowly, "I waited on table for my board, tended furnace and washed windows for lodging, and tutored for clothing and books."

"And I'm the prouder of you for it, dear," the girl broke in, quickly. "It is something to be proud of, to be glad of."

"Ye-es, in reminiscence perhaps. While it lasts though, it is a bit humiliating to be a servant. It used rather to gall me to get up early every morning and wait around with the other servants until the rich young fellows saw fit to hurry in for breakfast, about four minutes before chapel time—they'd been taking their beauty sleep—and then, to make up for their lost time we had to rush back and forth between them and the hot, dirty kitchen, so they wouldn't be late. All I ever got from them as I shot the coffee cups between their sleekly brushed heads, were curt nods and hurried good mornings. When they started out to run for chapel, I sat down and breakfasted on what was left. I used to wish that I, too, had to run to chapel—that

I was part of the same life. But I didn't have to run to chapel; I was excused because the faculty knew I was different, of a different class."

His face brightened as he told of the turning point in his college life. "But I had a good body." She smiled at him as he said this, so true it was, and so void of false pride. "And I knew if I could afford the time to try for the freshman crew I could make it. I managed to find the time, and won my seat easily. I was thrown with Lassiter Ellis, the captain, a son of old Harvey Ellis. That was my start; I held what I gained, and I sought for more. I made the eleven—body again. I became prominent in the class, as prominent as anyone perhaps, and this coming year I room with Carl Wildmerding. Think of that—Carl Wildmerding, who some day will be head of the house of Wildmerding in New York."

"I couldn't have talked about this to anyone else, Sylvia," he went on, "but you see what body has done for me. Why, I am to get a hundred dollars a week from a syndicate of eastern papers, for writing football articles this fall. If I weren't captain of

the team, I'd never have touched such a splendid thing; and so I want you to come to the Prom with me this winter. The other grinds, with whom I started in, can't afford to ask their girls to the Prom, but I can," he exclaimed, with pride. "And I want you to come. You'd better, for it's my senior year, and you needn't dream that you shall ever be allowed to go with anyone else." He frowned in mock jealousy, but his eyes were dancing.

"O-o-o-o-oh! how you frighten me," she smiled, "when you get into one of your green rages. Yes, evidently, the only safe way is for me to go with you; and I will. Dear," she added, softly, "you are very good to me."

"I want you to meet some of my friends," he said. "You'll see how different they are —Carl Wildmerding especially—from these Darbeyville fellows. He is a good friend. I told you what a splendid opening he offered me in a broker's office in New York. If I could take it, it might lead anywhere. I might—I really might become a millionaire."

He looked beyond her to the flaming red horizon, with smouldering eyes. "If I can only get a start," he muttered, half to him-

self, "nothing can stop me—nothing." The muscles stood out at the corners of his jaw, and his young mouth drew down into a hard, straight line.

"Do you want so much to go to New York?" she asked, gently.

"Oh! so much!" He paused, then added, "In some ways, that is. You see, Kitten, you complicate the problem a little." She winced as if from physical pain. "Oh, don't misunderstand," he explained, quickly. "I wouldn't go to New York, or Heaven either, for matter of that, without you."

As they swung open the gate to her front yard, she whispered, "Just think, tonight we shall be betrothed."

"Oh, we've been that for ever and ever so long—ever since I can remember."

"No, silly. It's not a betrothal until the girl's father has agreed."

"What do you think he'll say?"

"I think," she said, "that he'll demur for a while, on the ground that we're both too young, but that he'll give in, in the end. What else can he do? If he's not blind he must know that ever since we were children you've been the only one I ever cared two

straws about—" she checked herself, laughing in gay confusion; "no, I mean, of course, that I'm the only one you ever cared two straws about." There was a pause, and then she whispered, "Isn't that so, Paul?"

"Isn't what so, honey dear?"

"That I have always been the only one?"

For a long time before answering he looked at her, as she stood facing him on the broad veranda screened in from the street by climbing vines. The last glory of the sunset shone upon the weight of blue-black hair, braided in heavy strands above her broad, low forehead. He saw the radiance come to her great, clear, dark eyes.

"You are the only one, Sylvia," he said, with choking voice, "yesterday, today and forever."

He kissed her. "I'll be back at a little after eight. Until then—" He waved his hand to her and walked whistling down the street.

As long as he remained in sight she watched him, walking lightly and gracefully as any perfect animal. "Dearest," she whispered to him, across the distance, "I love

"YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE, SYLVIA."

you; dearest, I love you with all my soul and mind—aye, and body—forever and forever. Your ears can't hear what I am saying, but your heart knows every word of it."

CHAPTER III

DECEMBER CORN

The court-house in the center of the square, the Presbyterian church and the new business block on Main street were of brick. But in all of Darbeyville the only private house of brick belonged to old John Castle, president of the bank, commander of the local G. A. R. post, father of the Republican party in the county, the town's first and most masterful citizen.

Old John Castle was less masterful than usual, that night, when young Paul Potter asked him for Sylvia. "I have seen it coming, my boy," he said, sadly, "and I had hoped it would not come so soon. She is young, barely eighteen, and very, very innocent of the world. You must be good to her; you must be good to her."

He paused and clutched his grey beard with his bony fingers. "I have watched you carefully," he said, "more carefully than

perhaps you have realized, during your vacations when you have been working in the bank. You have been steady, you seem to understand credits, and you are a faithful collector. I think you can run the business well enough after I am gone." His eyes twinkled. "I suppose that has been your plan?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Paul. "You see, my room-mate, Carl Wildmerding IV, son of Carl Wildmerding III——"

John Castle interrupted quickly, "*The* Carl Wildmerding, the New York Wildmerding?"

"Yes, sir," said Paul, proudly. "He has offered to place me in a broker's office in New York—and that seems a great chance."

The old man looked sadly at the younger one: "Youth," he pondered; "youth will be served. To think that the son of a poor parson should have gone so far, so quickly, unhelped."

"But I can't let Sylvia go to New York now," he said, aloud. "I am old and may not have long to live, and I want her with me for my last days. Don't think, though, that that is my reason, even the smallest bit of my reason," he cried.

"What is the reason, then?" asked Paul, and he allowed his impatience to rise to his voice, even though he spoke to old John Castle, his employer, the richest and most masterful man in Darbey county.

"I wouldn't stand in the way of my daughter's husband," said the old man, gently; "but it is wisest for you not to start in New York. Few of its strong men have started there. It is better for you first to become the biggest power in Darbeyville and the county; then expand, go to Indianapolis or Chicago, and if again you are man enough to rise to the top, it will be time to go and conquer New York."

"But," persisted Paul, "I dislike to waste the backing I have. Such friends as Wildmerding and Ellis would give me an enormous advantage over other young men starting in."

"I don't know," said Mr. Castle, slowly, "if in the long run those friendships would help you or hurt you most."

"Hurt me," Paul interrupted; "how could they hurt me?"

"Well, they would probably keep you out of bed a good deal. The hours are pretty

late in New York, especially for a young man who has rich friends. You've never been accustomed to the excitement of the place, and it might throw you off your balance. On Sylvia's account I want you to be a little older and more steadied-down before plunging into that whirlpool. But don't worry, for if you have it in you, you'll win in the end. If the way seems a little roundabout now, it'll prove surer in the long run."

"But really, sir," objected Paul. "You don't understand. I'm not a child. I——"

Old John Castle's force returned. "If you don't want to stay in Darbeyville and inherit the soundest, solidest little bank in eastern Indiana, and allow my daughter to be with me in my old age, you don't have to," he said, "and I won't consent to your marriage. I doubt if you will be able to support her in any comfort in New York on the salary you would get as broker's clerk; and I will give her nothing if she chooses to disobey me. Come, lad," he put his hand kindly on Paul's shoulder. "You are a scholar—what is it great Cæsar said—'better first in a village than second in Rome'? You are sure, here; in New York you are taking a long chance,

and I couldn't meet my dead wife in the Great Beyond if I allowed you to gamble with my daughter's happiness."

For full three minutes the youth paced up and down the room, silently weighing his choice, his young face strangely marked by the lines of maturity. Finally he drew a very long breath. "Very well, sir," said he, "if you wish it I will stay in Darbeyville. I promise."

"And now," said Mr. Castle, "I want you to take a solemn oath, with your hand upon the Holy Bible—and then I shall give my unqualified consent to your marriage. You must swear before Almighty God that you will never speculate, never buy or sell securities, grains, staples, anything, on a margin. Speculation is gambling, and I will not give Sylvia a gambler for husband."

With his hand upon the Bible Paul made the oath.

The two men shook hands. "I am glad to have you for son-in-law," said the older. "Sit down and smoke a cigar with me, then you can go out and tell her. I want to give you a little advice. Remember that the basic principle of the banker's business is 'Play

safe.' If a man's good for it, be liberal and easy with him; keep his trade. If he's weak, shut down on him like that''—he struck his hands together. ''Your first duty, your only duty is to your family. Don't risk Sylvia, in God's name, to accommodate some friend. You must fight for yourself, and for her, against the world.'' He grew silent, then walked to the window and looked out. It was very dark, for the wind had veered to the northeast, and a light drizzle obscured the stars.

''Bad weather, eh, Paul?''

''Yes, sir; indeed it is.''

''Bad weather. Been bad all spring, hasn't it? Cold and wet. The weather reports show a deficiency of 202 degrees from normal since May first, when you may say the corn was planted. Very bad. Corn will be short this year.

A smile wrinkled his leathery face; he hummed a snatch from a battle song of the Rebellion.

''Yes, corn will be short crop,'' he continued; ''bound to be. December corn is too low—41½ asked last night. It'll go to 60.'' He beat a tattoo upon the pane.

"There'll be a short crop, all right; the early frost will catch it." He rubbed his palms together, and spoke with an unction which amazed Paul, for everything in that county depended on corn.

"No," rasped on the old man, "never speculate. You may make big winnings," he smiled slyly, "but it's a big risk. I never tried it myself." His look of covert slyness deepened as he chuckled.

CHAPTER IV

HEIRS OF NEW YORK

Across the hall from Paul Potter and Carl Wildmerding, and included in an almost equal intimacy, lived Billy Dunbar and big Lassie Ellis, captain of the crew. Conscientiously, month after month, Paul cemented closer his friendships with the three easterners. His quick mind had divined their status in the great world of New York; Dunbar, the past; Wildmerding, the present; Ellis, the future.

With only the slightest trace of embarrassment Paul told his friends of his engagement to the girl back home in Indiana, and wrote their names down on the Promenade dance card which he was filling out for her.

They felt a silent chagrin, as they warmly shook his hand in congratulation, and when he had left, Billy Dunbar said, "In a few years he'll be sorry he got tied up with a green country girl from his little one-horse

town, because she had pink cheeks and let him squeeze her, out buggy riding. I suppose she's a regular dairy maid. I wonder if we'll have to have her with us in the box?"

"There is no way out of it, boys," said Carl. "Paul is a nice, simple fellow who would do anywhere, and I wouldn't hurt his feelings for the world. We simply have to have his girl in the box with us. Probably she'll not jibe very well, but our women must stand it. They look on the Prom only as a sort of a lark, anyway."

"It is a blessed nuisance," sighed Lassie. "However, of course you're right, Carl. Wish Paul wasn't going to bury himself in Indiana. Thought he was going to take a job from you."

"He was," said Carl, "but enter the inevitable girl. I'm really sorry. He had the stuff in him to go to the front."

The marriage of Carl had also been arranged during the summer. Mrs. Henry Foulkerson Devereux had determined, when her daughter Anita was twelve, that some day she should marry Carl, who was then eleven.

She never forgot her purpose, and never

revealed it, except to Anita's older sister, Muriel, who had already married well, owing alike to her native shrewdness and her mother's precise strategy.

Muriel induced Carl to fall in love with her while still a freshman. The Wildmerding family did not object to his infatuation because, fearfully realizing that their eldest son was already the most bright and shining target in New York, they saw safety in his attentions to a married woman, attractive enough to hold him for a few years.

But Muriel did not try to hold him. Instead, she gradually transferred him to Anita, the engagement being definitely achieved on the day that old John Castle gave his consent to Paul.

It was finally decided that Paul and Sylvia; Billy and Katherine Dunbar; Lassie Ellis and a Philadelphia young woman, Miss Harrick; Carl and his fiancée, Anita Devereux; together with Anita's sister, Muriel Evers, for chaperone, were to occupy two adjoining boxes for the senior German on February fifth and for the great Promenade dance on February sixth.

The fair visitors to the college were left

hardly a moment for idleness or rest during the three days' festivity. On the afternoon of their arrival, teas were given for them in the fraternity houses of the Sheffield Scientific School. The collegians, their healthy young faces seeming out of place under high hats, escorted their enthusiastic guests from tea to tea, explaining as they passed, the various college show places.

Wherever the tall figure of Paul appeared, he was at once pointed out by his collegemates, exactly as if he had been the Pick and Spade society house, the residence of President Dwight or the ivy planted by the war class of '62.

Sometimes a dimpled visitor, after she had passed him, turned around in curiosity for another look at great Potter, oarsman, football captain, Tong and Shovel man, Phi Beta Kappa scholar, who, by merit and merit alone, had won to the front place in Yale.

Mrs. Evers, walking between Paul and Sylvia, laughed as girl after girl frankly stared at him. "It must be agreeable to be so entirely the center of interest in a place as big as New Haven, Mr. Potter?"

"Oh, every football captain is pointed out

by underclassmen, no matter who he is. It's the office, not the man."

"Now, that won't do, my young friend," smiled the young matron, affecting a vast superiority in age. "Carl tells me that you are a very great deal more than a splendid, magnificent animal; that you have wonderful sensibility of feeling; that you understand and appreciate the meaning of friendship; that you are loyal and simple through and through, and altogether fine. I think, Miss Castle, that you ought to be very well pleased, to have come with the man who, here where he is best known, stands so high."

The girl blushed brightly and smiled. "Oh, of course I am." She was shy before the famously fashionable Mrs. Richard Evers, whose name had penetrated to half the homes in the Union as perhaps the very gayest and most daring of all of Newport's gay and startling women.

One morning Sylvia had allowed her coffee to get cold as she read, wide-eyed, in her newspaper the account of how Mrs. Evers had bought and paid for all the seats of the Somerset roof garden, that she might transport the Firefly Musical Comedy Company

entire to Newport, to give by real moonlight, on the lawn surrounding her marble cottage, a private representation for her guests of the justly delightful and delighted-in pickaninny moonlight dance.

Sylvia had learned, too, how, only a week later, Mrs. Evers had dined, sitting cross-legged in the straw of a box stall upon a silken horse-blanket, eating with miniature golden pitchforks and drinking vintages from tiny stable pails.

Sylvia knew, as other Sylvias in other Darbeyvilles across the country knew, that Mrs. Evers, in brightly striped bathing suit, had won second prize in the hoop-rolling race on Bailey's beach; and that the long ears of her prize Pomeranian spaniel were adorned with pearl earrings.

In the presence of a lady of such exceeding accomplishment and audacity, it is no strange thing that the country girl found herself timid and ill at ease.

CHAPTER V

BIRDS OF PARADISE

No sooner had the opening bars of the Senior German filled the polished floor with slowly twirling couples than Sylvia, her glances traveling over Paul's broad shoulder as he guided her through the rhythmically moving throng, miserably felt that she was badly dressed.

When the first dance was over, she returned to the box and took lightning inventory of the gowns worn by the other women of the party. These differed in color, in material, in texture and in cut, but all alike were expensively designed to leave unclad the neck and portions of the shoulders, arms and back.

Anita Devereux, slightly flushed by the exercise, a few locks of her chestnut hair straying from its ordained confinement, was so radiant in her dress of pink tulle that Carl whispered, semi-audibly, "You'll do tonight,

'Nita." Then he turned to Mrs. Evers, "And I think sister'll do, too." Mrs. Evers tapped his fingers with her fan, "Nice boy, nice brother-in-law."

But Paul only said to Sylvia, as he handed her to her seat, "It's going to be hot. Why they can't ever ventilate this hall, I don't know."

His eyes were fastened on Mrs. Evers as he spoke, and he leaned forward in his chair, listening to the light fugitive words which passed about her, vainly seeking to make a graceful, facile entrance into the conversation of pleasant inconsequence whereof she was the center.

In his idea at that moment, Mrs. Evers was the most beautiful woman whom he had ever seen. Her chestnut hair, arranged in smooth, symmetrical waves, was held in place by diamond studded combs. Her black, pailletted gown, square cut and very low, fitted the graceful lines of her lithe body with a studiously designed closeness. Not a wrinkle, not a looseness, not a seam was visible. A single string of perfectly matched pearls encircled her slender neck.

For a full minute the young athlete leaned

forward, wonderstruck that woman could be so lovely, then, suddenly awakening to his infidelity, he turned to Sylvia and began to point out to her his friends among the black-coated men who were crossing and recrossing the hall, seeking their partners for the next dance.

But as he talked, his eyes turned again and again to Mrs. Evers, in silent gratitude for the perfection of her equipment. His apprehension of matters concerning woman's dress became that night abnormally sensitized. In contrast to the rigid, gelid, forcedly exact waves in Mrs. Evers' hair, he was not pleased with the loose, natural curves of Sylvia's. The girl's high-neck white muslin dress, loosely fitting, meagrely indicative, gathered no laurels from the black sequinned gown, which retreated from a neck of wondrous whiteness to define the lines of a supple figure.

Proudly Paul danced with Mrs. Evers, and proudly he heard her answer, when he had complimented her on her grace:

"How kind of you—to an old married woman like me," she said. "But how could anyone help dancing well with you? You

are so tall and strong." Smilingly she looked into his eyes.

When later in the evening they danced again together, he said, "I am happier now than I expected to be tonight."

"Remember, Mr. Potter, before you say any more nice things like that, that you are engaged to be married, and that I *am* married."

For a moment he was afraid that he had offended, but, reassured by a gleam of mischief in her eyes, plunged on: "Surely that is an iron and unlovely code which forbids one to observe and perhaps inhale the fragrance of beautiful flowers which now and again border the path along which one takes his walk of life, even though one knows that the garden where those flowers grow belongs to another man."

The Sousa two-step came to an end, and, as he withdrew his arm from her waist, she whispered, "All women like men with audacity and strength—and you have both." She looked at him as she looked at men who pleased her.

Anita, seeing, laughed and whispered to Katherine:

"Look at Muriel, flirting with that good-looking young Hoosier. She'd sit up in her coffin and flirt with her pall-bearers."

Paul pondered at the resemblance of type between Mrs. Evers and the Misses Dunbar, Devereux and Harrick. They seemed all to have come from one splendid scheme of things, to be parts of the same superb fabric. They used the calm, level, resonant tones of the aristocrat, in speaking; they were more perfectly dressed than he had known it was possible for women to dress; they were utterly self-possessed when they talked of subjects which would have thrown a girl from his home town into quick silence. He sighed, for against them Sylvia was pitifully middle-class and middle west.

CHAPTER VI

TEMPERAMENT AND TEMPER

Katherine Dunbar and Anita Devereux sat up in their dressing gowns, talking and smoking cigarettes, after Ethel Harrick had left them to go to bed.

"Did you have a nice time or not, Kathy?" said Anita.

"Oh, nice enough," answered Katherine, brushing out her long, unbraided hair. "Young Ellis was nice to me, but then he was pretty tight, so you can't tell if he meant anything. Ethel Harrick was making up to him all evening. She certainly means to have him. I think it's a shame—this cradle snatching."

"Oh, thank you, dear," purred Anita. "I suppose that's for me, because Carl's not graduated yet."

"Not at all, silly. I never thought of you so. Nobody does. Carl strikes me as a mature man, anyway—not a boy. He belongs

to several of the clubs already, doesn't he? But Lassie Ellis really is young, you know. He is insufferably tiresome about rowing, and he was so tight that he talked quite thick at the end of the evening. It made me just sick to see Ethel Harrick, old Philadelphia and Baltimore family that she is, throwing herself at him all evening long, just because everybody says his father will leave two or three hundred millions."

"Two or three hundred! Tra-la-la! It is hard to blame Ethel," laughed Anita.

"Yes, you may laugh about it. You are already taken care of. But think of the rest of us. We can't allow these Philadelphia and Baltimore girls to steal all our nicest young men, like a sort of reversed rape of the Sabines."

"Listen, Kathy. Take my advice and don't talk so much. Then after our wedding trip next fall we'll have a nice house party or driving party or yacht party or something, where there'll be plenty of propinquity for you and Lassie—and no Ethel Harrick."

"Anita, you're a dear."

The next night, as they were dressing for the Promenade, with kindly impulse Mrs.

Evers called to Sylvia, "Let my maid know when you want her. What dress are you going to wear tonight?"

"Why, the same one," said Sylvia. "It's not torn, and hardly mussed at all."

"Oh, dear me, that won't do. Come, make a real impression on that good-looking young man of yours. I have an extra one that would fit you perfectly. Show him how pretty you can be. I don't think he knows."

"You mean a low neck dress?"

"Surely."

"Oh, I wouldn't dare. He would know it wasn't mine, and he's the true-blue, straightforward sort that wouldn't like that sort of thing. Besides I've never worn one and I think I'd—well, anyway, thank you ever so much, I really can't."

"Little girl, you don't know men."

"I know one man, at least," she answered, with quaint dignity.

"They're all alike," answered the young married woman.

Sylvia's cheeks began to flush, her black eyes to open wide and sparkle. She stood in the door between the two rooms, her black hair tumbling about her, and flashed out, "If

I thought he would like me better because I had on a decollete gown of yours instead of my own dress, made in the way to which our people are accustomed, I'd think he was contemptible; I'd," here her voice dropped low, "dismiss him. But," she added, and her words rang out triumphantly, "he is not that sort of man. I know him."

"Brava, brava," laughed Mrs. Evers. "Real temperament. Well, then, there is no use trying to persuade you. I am sorry, for your own sake, that's all."

"Thank you ever so much, though. I shall never forget your—kindness," said Sylvia, into whose heart a small, dumb, blind suspicion had crept the night before, but who could not have acknowledged it, even in her prayers.

Three hours later, when she and Carl Wildmerding were sitting out a dance together, the talk fell on Paul.

"Really, Miss Castle," said his friend, "I am not exaggerating because I am his roommate. In the opinion of everybody who knows him, he is one of the very finest, most upright and most honorable of men, and he is far and away the most popular man in

the class; yet, he is unspoiled. He goes on his unassuming way, succeeding in everything he undertakes, whether it be athletics, studies or, most important of all, in the use of his immense influence. You will pardon me, I know, and understand, when I say that I think you are a lucky girl to have won such a man."

Just then Sylvia looked across the hall to see Paul talking to Mrs. Evers, both of them in great animation. It in nowise astonished her that a son of the house of Wildmerding should speak with such high praise of the man she was to marry, or that a powerful woman of fashion should take such open pleasure in his company. She could comprehend why Paul, handsome, strong, clever, grave, masculine Paul, should interest them; but she was beginning to wonder how she had ever interested him.

Carl continued: "We had hoped at one time he would come to New York, where he was bound to do well. But the eternal feminine intervened," he smiled, "and now he says he won't. Mark my words, though; he'll be heard from sooner or later. He's bound to."

At the same moment Katherine Dunbar, whose heart lay with Sèvres, Japanese prints, the covers of hand-bound, rough-edged books, and the morning musicales in Mr. Darlington's perfumed, darkened studio, heard again the story of the moose Ellis had killed; while Ethel Harrick, impatiently watching them, could pay but scant attention to Billy Dunbar's Bacchic humor.

Paul had the next to the last dance with Mrs. Evers, and when the strains of "Home, Sweet Home" began, they had not returned to the box.

It was an extremely untoward incident, for it is an old Yale tradition that the farewell waltz of the Promenade is the sweetest of them all, and that each man must dance it through from the first bar to the last, without stop or rest, with her whom he has chosen as the girl of girls, and who has conferred honor and joy upon him by accepting his invitation to Yale's greatest fiesta.

There was a feeling of uneasiness in the party when the music started and the absence of the couple was evident. Then Billy Dunbar and his sister; Lassie Ellis and Ethel

Harrick; Carl Wildmerding and Anita Devereux swung out upon the floor.

Katherine Dunbar was smiling the smile of good workmanship; Ethel Harrick, discontentedly, Anita pleasantly, and Sylvia left sitting alone in the box, angrily. But all smiled, because they were women at a ball.

Almost immediately Paul and Mrs. Evers hurried up. "Oh, dear," she exclaimed, "I tore a ruffle and had to stop to fix it, or I'd have tripped. I'm so sorry I kept Mr. Potter."

"It amounts to nothing," answered the girl who had been affronted, speaking quite serenely, though hell-fire burned within her.

"Come Sylvia, let us hurry," said Paul waiting at the entrance of the box for her to come out.

"Really, no," she said gently and sweetly. "My head aches and I can't stand any more twirling about in this hot room. Will you help me with my cloak, Mrs. Evers? Ah, thank you."

"But, Sylvia, we must have this last one together," he insisted, alarmed.

"No, thank you very much," she answered in honey tones. "I don't feel a bit like it."

Dawn teas, now unhappily abolished, formerly contributed much to the romance of the Promenade. Girls and men, still in the clothes which they had worn at the dance, assembled in the early morning, in the various rooms of the dormitories to brew tea and coffee, and to cook over chafing dishes. The visitors gaily examined the rows of beer steins on the mantel shelves, the racks of blackened silver-mounted pipes, the photographs, cushions, flags, society shields, stolen barber poles and other insignia of college life while the proud, emboldened hosts delighted, under the wearying eyes of the chaperones, in completing the half spoken sentences of the evening or in seeking a reinforcement of glances won earlier. The dawn tea was more deadly to coolheadedness than the night's dance.

As they walked out from the great Armory door and the cold air of February met them with its shock, Sylvia said: "Paul, I am not up to going to that tea in Mr. Ellis' rooms this morning. So, will you take me home, please?"

"But, sweetheart, what is the matter? I

can't help it that Mrs. Evers tore her dress, and I couldn't leave her there in the middle of the floor. Come, be reasonable."

"I am reasonable. I simply don't feel well enough to sit up all the rest of the night and I want to go to bed. You may go back to the tea, without me."

"Well, you certainly make it pleasant—breaking up the party and making me ridiculous," the youth muttered sulkily.

When they reached the New Haven house, standing in the shadow of the vestibule, he sought to put his arm about her. She spoke sharply: "Don't, please. I don't feel as if I could let you tonight."

The door swung open and she faced him, holding her hand. "Good-night," she said simply, "I've had such a pleasant time, and"—but here her self-control gave way.

With lightning rapid words, rushing from her soul like water from a bursting dam, she overwhelmed him: "And now you can go back to that tea and to those women who wear their dresses half off because they think all men are alike. Go back and drink more with those men who are already half-maudlin with drink. Go back to the woman who stole what

was dearest in the world to me—my faith in you. Go away from sincerity and simplicity and homeliness to gaudy glitter and display and pretense. Turn your face away from your own people and turn it to the New Yorkers. Go, and know you go forever."

"Sylvia, you are becoming hysterical. I have shown nothing but the most ordinary courtesies to the guests of my friends," he exclaimed in amazement.

"I may be a bit hysterical, as you put it," she answered. "Who wouldn't, who saw life dissolving? It's not what you *did* tonight that has brought me to this decision. It's what you were thinking, tonight and last night. I knew what you were thinking, Paul. I saw where your eyes traveled; and when they brightened and when they dulled. I know that I seemed to you like a barnyard hen beside those birds of paradise. Well, go back to them. Some day, perhaps, although I fear not until after bitterness, you will learn more about those glittering birds of paradise."

"Don't be silly, girlie. You talk like a child." Again he tried to lay his hand upon her.

"No, don't touch me. You must have a chance, and so must I, to think it over. It would be foolish now to try to reestablish things on a false basis. For this is real. It can't be passed over lightly. Now go back to the tea, back to Mrs. Evers, who is doubtless wondering where you are."

"Sylvia, please be reasonable and come with me."

"No; good night." The door shut. The girl went upstairs and threw herself sobbing on the bed. "God send he doesn't go back," she moaned. "God send he doesn't go back."

But Paul, when she was gone, grew very wicked looking. "Well, then, if she's so set on my going back to Mrs. Evers," he said between his clenched teeth, "I'll do it." And he did.

CHAPTER VII

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

The next day Sylvia gave Paul no further chance to explain, refusing to be alone with him before she left for home. But four days later he received a letter from her.

"Darbeyville, Ind.
Tuesday, February 11.

My dear Paul:

Very unhappily I write you this letter; but I have no choice—I must do it.

It seems to me best for your own sake that you should be free. As I watched you and heard about you in New Haven, it became very, very evident to me that you might be making an irremediable mistake to settle down here in Darbeyville, as we planned last summer. You could have a bigger, broader, wider life elsewhere. And that is what you are made for. You were not meant to rust out in the country.

Mr. Wildmerding talked with me about you. I saw how disappointed he was that you weren't going to New York to take the position he had made ready for you. I am sure from what he said that it is still open to you; and I want you to take it—for my sake. If you ever cared for me, you will do this.

I saw many things clearly and for the first time during my brief visit to New Haven. I saw that your strength and ambitious spirit really compel you to adventure. The young eagle cannot hop about the home lawn like a robin-redbreast, but must try a higher flight, nearer the burning, sometimes scorching, sun.

To be quite practical, it would be folly for you to start in New York with a low salary and a wife. And if you stayed here for my sake, you would soon begin to think in your heart that I had ruined your career, that I had finally closed the doors of opportunity, which I see are still open to you. As soon as I knew that you had begun to think in that way, it would kill me. And so, good-bye, Paul. That God may always watch over you and guard you, is the constant prayer of

SYLVIA.

When he had finished reading the letter, he sat for a long time looking into the blazing log fire. Presently Carl came in, drew up a Morris chair under the student lamp and began to read.

After a time, noticing Paul's silent and fixed stare into the jumping flames, he asked with a smile: "Why so pale and wan, fond lover? Prithee, why so pale?"

"Nothing—but, Carlie."

"Yes?"

"If I wanted that job next summer, could I still have it?"

Carl whistled. "Are matters as serious as that? I'm awfully sorry, old man; but they'll probably mend. One thing you may be sure of, though—that if you want that job, or whenever you want it, you shall have it." Their hands met in the clasp of friendship.

Paul decided as he lay awake that night, thinking the whole thing over most methodically, that Sylvia's feelings had been hurt by his flirtation with Mrs. Evers, and that so, in proud humility, she had written to release him.

Just as many a simple countryman grows light headed, when first he attends a flashing,

gay-colored musical comedy, so likewise he had been carried away by the carefully developed arts of charm which the New York woman exercised. Yes, his had been the case of the simple countryman and nothing else. He smiled wryly at the reflection.

Now the glitter was gone, the siren and her siren ways departed. It was time for him to return to the workaday world, to carve out his steady life as he had planned; to become Sylvia's husband, and heir apparent to old John Castle, the first man of Darby county. New York was uncertain; successorship to John Castle, as the old man himself had argued, sure and immediate.

Always, since their kindergarten days, his life and Sylvia's had been intertwined. Often he had given her offense, which she had been quick to take; but always in the end she had forgiven him. Yes, she would forgive him now. He knew it.

He put on his dressing gown, threw the light upon his desk and wrote:

"Yale University, February 14, 3 A. M.
My dearest:

If you realized what pain and misery your

letter would bring to me, you would not have sent it.

I cannot, cannot, give you up, Sylvia—and I won't. New York means nothing to me without you; nor does anything else.

I love you, dearly beloved, with all my heart and soul and strength and mind; and I will marry you, because it is ordained. We were made for each other, and in your heart of hearts you know it.

We have four days' vacation at Washington's birthday and I am going out to Darbeyville to see you, crew or no crew. I'll explain it is on account of sickness, and it is on account of sickness—heart sickness. I will reach home the morning of the 21st on the 8:55. I wonder if anybody will meet me?

Forever yours,

PAUL."

He folded the letter into an envelope which he sealed, stamped and directed, so that he might mail it on his way to breakfast.

But he overslept the next morning, and had barely time to jump into his clothes, crush the letter into his pocket and rush into chapel on the very stroke of 8:10, breakfastless.

As he ran through the gap between the senior and sophomore fences, toward the wide gates of the chapel, he reached out his hand to the newsboy who stood there. The boy whipped him his paper with a very respectful "Good morning, Mr. Potter," as becoming to the captain of the team of the decade.

During the choir's initial drone, Paul glanced over the first page of his paper; at the beginning of the long prayer he turned to financial. His eyes traveled quickly down the stock quotations, to fall upon this item:

SMALL BANK FAILS IN INDIANA.

Assets $100,000—Liabilities $450,000—President Had Been Buying Corn.—Flurry Entirely Local.

Darbeyville, Ind., Feb. 13.—Because John Castle, president of the State Bank of Darbeyville, thought December corn would go to 60 cents and backed his opinion with nearly half a million dollars of the funds of his bank, the State Examiner closed the doors of the concern this afternoon. Affairs were found to be in a very bad condition, and depositors cannot hope for over 15 or 20 cents on the dollar.

It is said by friends of Mr. Castle, who is seventy-seven years old, that his mind has been evidently failing for some time past.

An examination of his private books shows that last year he made $100,000 by selling corn short on the Chicago Board of Trade.

This year he has been constantly predicting a light crop, owing to the heavy cold spring rains. He began early last June buying December corn, through Stillman & Steinfeldt, and Dickhaut Brothers, of Chicago. The crop was unexpectedly large, however, and corn prices suffered.

Castle lost in his speculations his entire private fortune of $200,000, as well as $250,000 of the bank's funds. Remaining assets are said to be less than $75,000.

Following his public exposure, Mr. Castle was seized late tonight with a stroke of apoplexy. Owing to his age and enfeebled condition, it is not expected that he will live. His daughter is at his bedside. Two deputy sheriffs have been stationed in the house to arrest the embezzler if he recovers consciousness, which does not seem probable.

Indianapolis, Ind., Feb. 13.—The failure of the State Bank of Darbeyville did not cause a ripple in banking circles here. "The failure of the Darbeyville Bank," said President Loode, of the Fifth National Bank, which has been local correspondent of the Darbeyville concern, "is unimportant. Our interests with it were well protected, and we shall lose little, if at all. The banks of Indianapolis are sound to the core, and can be shaken by no such trivial occurrence."

Paul walked slowly out into the air, his house not in order.

He made his way toward his eating club and as he came to the mail box, mechanically he pulled down the pivoted cover and reached to his pocket for the letter to Sylvia, which he had written, directed, sealed and stamped the night before. His mind had been fully made up to post the letter early that morning and now his muscles were obeying the not yet countermanded decree of his will. But before it was too late, he bethought himself. Very slowly he let the box-cover revolve back to its position; very slowly he put the letter into his pocket and walked on to his breakfast.

He did not attend his 9:30 recitation, but returned to his room. He would have to think it out all over again.

It was now a case not of whether he would marry Sylvia, but of whether he could. He had no money. If he went back to Darbeyville to live he could make little enough there, the bank being smashed. (What an old fool John Castle was, anyway.) He could hope for nothing better than a clerkship in a store. On such pay he could barely support one—let alone two—or more.

And Sylvia had been right about the impracticability of his taking her to New York.

That was a man's game in New York, and required a man's strength—his *undivided* strength. The poet knew, when he sang, "He travels the fastest who travels alone." It would not merely handicap him, it would absolutely ruin his every chance, if he tried to carry a woman through the battle that would be hard enough for him alone and unimpeded.

And Sylvia. He did love her and must consider her. Wouldn't she certainly and inevitably be wretched, if tied together, like two drowning people, they should be submerged in the sea of poverty? It was not after all his fault that her father had been a senile idiot. So the old hypocrite had been margining orders on the Chicago Board of Trade at the very time last summer when he had made Paul swear on the Bible never to speculate. Well then, he, Paul Potter, would not be dragged down for the sins of a crooked old banker.

He took the letter to Sylvia out of his pocket once more, kissed it, whispered "Goodbye, dear, it's hard luck," and threw it unopened into the fire.

Then lest the people of Darbeyville should believe that the breaking of his engagement

had been occasioned by John Castle's failure, he wrote to his sister:

Yale University, Feb. 13.

My dear sister:

I am terribly broken up. Today, for no reason that I know, the enclosed letter came from Sylvia.

It is evident to me that she no longer cares for me and is merely trying to let me down easily. Has she been going around with anybody else?

After all, it seems fate that I should go to New York. But you can't imagine how I feel this, the cruelest disappointment in my life.

Always affectionately your brother,

PAUL.

He enclosed Sylvia's letter of February 11, in thankfulness that it had been written two full days before the crash. He went out to the mail box. This time he lifted the pivoted cover firmly and dropped the letter in.

When Carl came into the room for his noon pipe, Paul was quietly studying. "Hello Carlie," said he. "Oh, about that job we were speaking of again last night. I've been

thinking it over, and I'll take it. And a hundred thousand thanks to you, old man."

"That's good; that's fine," responded the other. "I'm delighted. Now I'll have a chance to see you after we leave this blessed spot. And that really means a lot. Friendships aren't lightly to be thrown away."

The athlete threw his arm about his roommate's shoulder, "That's about as nice a Valentine," said he, "as came to anybody on this old campus today, I imagine. You don't know how obliged I am, old fellow. Come on, let's go to lunch."

CHAPTER VIII

YOUNG ONES WITHOUT SPECTACLES

Not many people attended the funeral of old John Castle. He had stolen the money of his neighbors.

Sylvia was dumbly wretched, like a wraith, her waxy white face ghostly-seeming between the lustrous black hair above and the dull black dress below. She shed no tears; her heart was dry and desolate as a desert free from all oases.

Night after night she lay awake, thinking of herself in a weird, detached way as if her misfortunes had befallen some other. "Poor girl," she would say, "her father was out of his mind. The man I knew for so long was not a thief until the Unknown suddenly stripped him of his soul. It is curious that other people cannot see this; that they cannot pity him now that he lies in his coffin dead,

terribly dead. But they do not pity him—not even a little bit. They hate him. His friends of twenty years, of thirty years, of fifty years, hate him now, because he took their money. He is punished, punished terribly, for he is dead in dishonor, dead forever. His name is black, and will always be black. He can never do anything to wash it clean, he will never be given another chance. They are alive, they have the sunshine, they have their children and love and laughter and life. He is dead, alone in the darkness with the worms and the black of the grave; and still they hate him. His daughter is alive; but she cannot help him. The man who was her lover does not love her now. Poor girl, poor girl.''

Almost without exception the friends of her girlhood were loyal to her. But the pity of those who sorrowed with her, hurt even more than the occasional slights put upon her by those who thought of her, not as Sylvia Castle, but as the daughter of John Castle, the thief.

The torture of her pride became very poignant and suddenly one night, after a par-

ticularly bitter day, she took the train for Chicago.

By the sale of her finery, the very finest finery that had ever been in Darbeyville, she obtained a little over one hundred dollars; and with this fortunate reserve she turned her face to the great city to complete her education in the University of Self-Support.

Sylvia had graduated from the high school with first honors; she had been two years at the state university; she had been instructed in dancing, in painting, in singing, in French. In the annual performance of the Isis Club, she had been cast for Juliet; and long years afterwards it was said by those who had seen the performance, said more emphatically long years afterwards than at the time, that she had been a Juliet of exceeding charm.

But now, when she found herself strangely and suddenly included in the scope of the curse of Adam, she sorely repented that she had not spent more time in learning how to work, and less time in learning how to play.

She was ten days in Chicago before she could find employment. She knew no trade and was barred from answering the newspaper advertisements for skilled workers.

She did not want to become a domestic servant, until the last necessary moment, because that humiliation seemed to her almost unendurable.

On the eleventh day she entered a tall building within the loop district and asked the floor-walker at the door for the gentleman in charge of the employments.

"Manager, seventh floor," said he.

She found her way to a big glazed cage. "Is the manager in?" she asked the office boy who guarded its entrance. "I wish to apply for a position."

"You don' wanta see him. See Mr. Johnson." The boy turned on his heel and entered the glazed door of the cage.

Twenty minutes later the boy came out and Sylvia meekly inquired, "Where can I find Mr. Johnson?"

"He's out to lunch; he don't see salesladies 'till three o'clock."

At three she was waiting again at the door. Two other girls were ahead of her. She hoped that neither of them would get the situation which she needed.

When at last she was shown in, a pleasant faced young man wearing glasses, leaning

back in a swivel chair, faced her. She remained standing. "Ah, Miss"—he paused.

"Castle."

"Miss Castle, you desire a position with the firm. Saleslady? Yes. What has been your experience?"

"I haven't had any, sir."

"Ah, that is unfortunate. You see inexperienced girls are not of much use. We have to train them, to teach them the art of salesmanship, for it is an art, a real art."

"Of course, sir."

"And so we are unable to pay more than a moderate compensation to beginners, to pupils, so to speak, who are learning the art of salesmanship in our institution."

"How much could you pay?"

"Do you live at home?" he answered.

"No, sir," and she began to explain her circumstances.

But Mr. Johnson cut her short before she was nearly done. "We can offer you six dollars a week, if you fill out this blank satisfactorily, and give us proper references to verify your statements. But if you are a quick learner and take a real interest in the welfare of the firm, you will receive an in-

crease in your compensation in due season. Fill this blank out tonight and leave it here tomorrow. You will be notified Saturday morning by postal card whether we shall require your services."

"Not until Saturday?" asked the girl blankly. It was only Tuesday, and she would be wasting three days when she might be seeking other employment.

"Not until Saturday," answered Mr. Johnson abruptly. "Good day." He raised his voice, "Jimmy."

"Yessir."

"How many more?"

"Four, sir."

"Tell two to wait, young ones without spectacles. Tell the other two we have nothing for them."

"Yessir."

The application blank which Mr. Johnson directed Sylvia to fill out read as follows:

Name (in full).
Address.
Age
Religion.
Who is dependent on you for support?

For what position do you apply?
What salary have you been receiving?
What salary do you expect?
Were you ever a member of a Trade Union?
Married or single?
How many children?
Do you promise to report anyone to the Superintendent who in your judgment is not working for the best interests of the firm?
Were you ever bonded? If so, when and where?
Where did you work last year?
Under whom? For what salary? How long did you work there?
Why did you leave?
Give three references who are not relatives.

The girl had also been instructed to sign the following contract:

"In consideration of my employment, the sufficiency of which consideration I hereby assert, I do hereby, for myself and my legal representatives, release the firm of Dawson and Dawson from all liability to me in case of accident, sickness, disease or death, no matter how the same may be caused. I do

also herewith covenant and agree that this agreement shall be a bar to any action against them on account of such accident, sickness, disease or death, or for any other cause whatsoever. My engagement can be terminated at any time at the option of the firm.

Signed .....
Witness .....
Witness .....

Sylvia filled out the application blank and signed the contract to the satisfaction of Dawson and Dawson, for she received a postal card on Saturday to report Monday morning at 7:45 A. M. to Mr. Stacey, in charge of the toy department in the basement.

CHAPTER IX

AN IMPULSE TO ART

In all institutions of learning, freshmen are hazed; and Sylvia, who had begun her course in the University of Self-Support, did not escape. But the process in her case was an exceptionally light one. Her nature was comprehending and sympathetic; she could quickly adjust herself. Her mind was alert; she could quickly learn. Her courage was keen, for necessity drove her. It was not long before she doffed the colors of the amateur of which she had once been proud, and with yet greater pride donned the colors of the professional in life.

In her loneliness in a city of strangers she relieved the pent-up gregariousness of her vital nature by pouring out into a blank book the confidences she knew not where else to bestow.

An Impulse to Art

On June 28, 189—, the day when Paul Potter stroked his last Yale crew to victory, she wrote:

I am afraid I am losing my grip on the finer things of life. I have read very little lately. Somehow, I can not get up the courage, after being on my feet all day in the basement of the store. The air is fearfully close down there, and they won't let you sit down, even on the rare occasions when there is nobody to wait on.

I am in the toy department and have to be careful because the little boys steal marbles if you don't watch them. The detective caught two last week at my counter and took them away. He said they were old offenders. They fined me fifty cents for carelessness and told me they'd discharge me if it happened again. I don't know what became of the little boys.

I have been fined every week since I began at the store. The first week, seventy-five cents, because I broke a lot of rules I didn't know about. The floorwalker, who was in charge of our section (his name is Stacey, a middle aged man, tall, bald and sallow), was kind about it, but explained it was the rule

of the house to report new employes to make them careful.

July 6. I must make more money soon. I pay $4.50 for board and lodging, and don't usually get over $5.25 at the store on account of fines. It seems as if you couldn't remember all the rules. I was fined twenty-five cents yesterday for impertinence to an old woman who had been haggling about exchanging a soiled dime doll for half an hour. I suppose I was impertinent, too, in a way, but my head ached and I was so hot and tired. She finally said, "Well, if you don't want to take it back, I'll trade elsewhere after this." I told her the store could probably get along without her valuable patronage. Then she reported me, and they fined me.

August 1. I am afraid I'm getting lax, for I am getting accustomed to swearing. Most of the girls swear a little towards the end of the day, though they're "perfect ladies" at eight o'clock in the morning when the doors open. A girl named Blanche Nevins works next to me. She is really nice and good-hearted and sweet, though a little rough in her talk.

Mr. Stacey, the floorwalker, asked me to

go out to dinner with him next Saturday night. I told Blanche about it, and she laughed queerly and said: "Well, kid, I don't know what I'd do if I was you. He's no account, but if you go, your fines'll stop off short. How're you fixed—on the level, I mean? Tell me because I like you."

I told her, and she said it was a hard luck story. She said if I lived home and was just picking up my little old six bones for pin money, it'd be all serene, but it looked like I was up against it, good and plenty. She said it was up to me. Did I want to go out to dinner with old Staceys, or work out as help in a house? Because I'd probably have to do one or the other, sooner or later.

I said maybe I'd go out with him then, for after all that was saving something and I might get a good dinner. She looked solemn and said, "Well, it's a damned shame, kid; why can't you get a feller to marry you? Now, don't spring the love racket on Sister Wise here; just hook up with the first one that can afford a ticket to St. Joe, and if things don't pan out right, why you're just as much to the good as if you'd never took

the vacation. Let hubby do the hustling, and you stay home and take it easy."

I asked her why she didn't practice what she preached. She surprised me (for I never knew she had been married) by saying, "Sure, I did it—last summer. I didn't start working again till January. I'm waiting for my divorce now, and I want alimony, too, just to jar Willie Tightwad. He won't pay it, of course—sure not—but it'll hurt his feelings all right, all right, even to think about paying."

August 4. Mr. Stacey was quite ugly when I went out for my coffee and doughnuts at noon. He glared at me, but didn't say anything. I was so afraid of being reported again that on my way in I stopped and chatted with him and smiled sweetly. Immediately he began to purr.

It was terribly hot today—96 degrees in the weather bureau and about 110, I should judge, down in the toy department. It's a rule of the house that there shall be no thermometer here in the basement, although Blanche told me one of the city laws requires it. But they've got the matter in the courts, so they don't have to pay attention to the

law. I don't see what good a thermometer would do anyway. What we need is fresh air.

Blanche fainted this afternoon and so did two other girls. They took them up to the cloak room and laid them on the floor under an open window. Most of the girls who faint work in the basement. Blanche fainted last week, too. I don't think she is very strong, but she won't own up to it. This afternoon she came down after an hour, very sullen and swearing. She said: "By God, kid, if I was as pretty as you, I'd get something easier than this."

August 14. I always liked to read in novels that the heroine was excessively *soignée*. To be scrupulously neat and careful about myself was almost a mania with me, when I could afford that luxury. For now I discover that cleanliness is not a necessity, but a luxury. It's fearfully humiliating to think of that, isn't it? We have just one little tin bath-tub in the house, and eighteen lodgers—so it's obvious that I can't get as much use of it as I would like—I spend more on laundry, I suppose, than any two other people in the house, but even so, I should spend twice again as much. The soot is something fright-

ful, inconceivable, when the wind is from the factories to the east and southeast of us. It's simply impossible to keep clean; and when you acquiesce in that fact, when you lose the ideal that at all events, at all costs, you must be clean, you lose also a good deal more, you lose your grip on the whole set of ideals that were near relatives to that one. It is hideous to feel your standard lowering, hideous, *hideous*. But beggars can't choose their standards. My standard is lowering, because I am losing my passion for cleanliness. And that is happening, because poverty is compelling me to accept uncleanness as part of the day's work.

It is destructive of pride to lower your colors so, and it is only a fine, high pride after all that places us above men. But I can't help it. My pride must be lowered. My pocket-book ordains it. Kismet.

August 18. Last night (Saturday) I went to dinner with old Stacey. It wasn't so bad after all. He took me out to a beer garden on the northwest side, where there was a little breeze and a surprisingly good band. I took some beer, and though a little bitter, it was delightfully cool and refreshing. He

tried to get sentimental toward the end, but I managed him. He took me home on the car and tried to kiss me good-night, and did succeed in giving me, as I was opening the door, a little peck on the ear. Such an idea would have given me the shivers once, but still beggars can't be choosers. I had a nice dinner and a nice time listening to the band, and I really enjoyed myself. If it hadn't been for his pompousness and self-importance and silly talk, it would have been an ideal evening.

August 19. I ought to be twice as much ashamed as I am, but Stacey is married! I never dreamed it until this morning when Blanche told me. Pretty soon the old reprobate came smirking up, as fresh as paint. I said, "How is Mrs. Stacey?", but it never feazed him at all. He just puffed out his chest like a pouter pigeon and strutted down the aisle with a killing smile.

September 15. Another man is making love to me now—Bertie Henry. He boards at the house. He's a funny little man and quite harmless. He works at Hargis', the fashionable men's haberdasher on Jackson Boulevard. He's sort of a combination model and salesman, for he has to wear the very

latest thing in neckties, socks, collars and shirts which Hargis sells. He's an animated shop window for them, but he likes it. He says it gives a man the feeling of being at the very top of his profession to work at a store like Hargis'. Besides wearing the latest importations of masculine lingerie, he has to go to a tailor and have his clothes made to order. He says Mr. Hargis expects his assistants to appear like gentlemen, consulting with other gentlemen, when making a sale, and nobody can do that in ready-made clothes. Bertie also invariably wears patent leather shoes. His favorite expressions are Egad and Bah Jove. He must have caught them at an English society play at Powers'. Still Bertie's heart is not bad, and he's probably as good as the rest of us.

September 20. Thinking of P. and everything all day. Can't write; must stop thinking. Surprising how little, after all, I have been thinking. Too busy, I suppose, and tired out.

September 30. After I'd been out to dinner with Stacey again he got so insistent that I grew frightened—and then Blanche arranged everything. I wrote him a note at her sug-

gestion, saying that if he wished I'd meet him that evening at seven o'clock near the door of the Von Moltke summer garden. I went on that I was sick, and would he please send me a note through Blanche as to whether he could do it. I said I hoped we might become goods friends again, *and stay friends.*

The old sinner, according to Blanche, ogled himself in a looking glass back of the counter for a full minute, then sat down and with his fountain pen wrote the mushiest effusion one can imagine to the effect that his dreams were finally nearing realization, etc., etc. It was a perfect mess that made me sick to read. Of course, I didn't meet him, but the next Monday morning, when he came up like a thundercloud and began to scold me for some alleged breach of rule and threaten a report, I leaned over the counter and whispered to him that if he didn't behave, both to me and to Blanche, from then on, I'd send a copy of the letter to his wife and show the original to Mr. Johnson. You ought to have seen the old coward shrivel up. Blanche says the only thing to do with certain guys is to get 'em on paper.

October 21. I have been out twice to din-

ner and the theatre with Bertie Henry. He's not really a man, of course, but he is kinder and sweeter natured than one I knew who was a man, though a very selfish one. Bertie proposed to me last night. I found out that he gets eighteen dollars a week, and in order to keep his place he has to use every cent of it on his "varnished boots," shirts, ties, socks, and tailor-made clothes. He spends an hour every evening down in the laundry pressing his coat and trousers and polishing his shoes. Of course he gets everything from his store at wholesale rates, but his dressing keeps him poor. He says Mr. Hargis told him that he paid his assistants so well in order that they might invariably and at all times appear and act like gentlemen. When I told Bertie that he didn't seem able to support a wife, he cried, and said that was so, but he loved me and couldn't help telling me so. It seems he expected that after we were married we should continue to board in Dearborn Avenue and go down town together in the morning, work all day in our separate stores, and come home together at night. A beautiful scheme. What if there were consequences?

November 17. Relief and Deliverance. A

Red Letter Day. I am going on the stage. Yesterday I found I had just $10 left, which would last me about ten weeks. That is, I spend nearly seven dollars every week, and make six or under. When I reckoned it would cost me four and a half dollars a week to live, I was only counting board and lodging. I had forgotten clothes, laundry, lunch down town, and sometimes when I'm terribly tired in the evening or it's raining, carfare. Then I have spent some money on fruit, but I really had to. They have been giving us here in the boarding house, right through the summer, pork and beans, corned beef and cabbage, fried veal, boiled beef and coffee (chicory). The only fruit has been stewed prunes every other day. And practically no vegetables, except boiled potatoes or lumpy mashed potatoes.

When I saw I only had ten dollars left, I thought I would do something foolish and I went to the theatre. I got a good gallery seat at the Temple of Fine Arts, where there was a stock company in "Sir Richard's Second Wife."

The plot was clever, and the play has had a great success. When it was new, three

companies were doing it at once. But I was more interested in the poor acting of the heroine than in the play. I didn't blame Sir Richard much, considering what a stilted, unnatural, simpering, hysterical fool she was, and her step-son, who was the villain, had all my sympathy. His pleasure with that idiotic Lady Richard must have been short lived.

A sudden inspiration seized me; I would go on the stage. I couldn't act worse than the woman who did Lady Richard, anyway. I found from an usher that I could catch the manager of the company at the theatre between 6:30 and 7, and he turned out to be Henry Leamington, who acted Sir Richard.

He was sitting at a desk in a little room on the second floor of the building when I went in. He was in his shirt sleeves, smoking a cigar. He is really good looking off the stage, but his hair is grayish and he has wrinkles about his eyes and mouth. I should judge he was between forty and forty-five. He has a very nice, kind smile.

"Well, my dear," he said, looking up at me, "stage struck, I see."

I don't know how he saw, but I told him

I wanted to go on the stage. He waited a moment and then said:

"Sit down, my child, and listen to me. I have a small part in the company which you might be able to fill," my heart leapt, "but I am not going to give it to you. I see you have never been in the business, and I shan't be the one to start you. There's enough on my soul already. Take the word of an old actor, one who knows the thing inside out, who's starred in New York one year and played one night stands in the wilds of Arkansas the next. Go back to your home, go back to your friends, go back to the young fellow who loves you, for I can see by your pretty face that there is one"—he pinched my cheek, but not a bit in an offensive way—"and make a solemn vow that you'll never see a show except from in front."

I told him that I had made up my mind firmly and wanted to become an actress.

He seemed to become angry, for he walked up and down and gesticulated: "You don't know what you say; you are foolish, foolish to think of this thing. You can't begin to conceive what the life is. You come down at 9:30 in the morning and rehearse for next

week's play, till your bones ache and your head swims. At 1:30 you dress for the matinee, for we have one every day. At 5:30 you're out for supper, and at 7:30 you're back to the theatre to get ready for the evening performance. You get home about 11:30, after a sandwich and a cup of coffee, and spend a couple of hours studying your part for the week after next, which you must have letter perfect the following Monday morning. Don't fool yourself; there are no champagne suppers in the stock business; there are no Johnnies at the stage door. It's just hell without trimmings."

Then I burst back at him and told him that I wasn't terrified by his picture; that if I had to have hell somewhere, I'd rather have it on the stage, where you at least had a chance to think, than at Dawson & Dawson's, where you did nothing but stand up all day in fetid, foul air and placate the floorwalker.

I told him I had to leave there anyway pretty soon, because my money would run out, and that I had no home but a room in a boarding house, which the smoke from the soap factories came into when the wind was

from the southeast; and that there was no young man in the world for me any more.

By that time I was so nervous that I began to cry, and he said, finally, that he'd give me a trial, and that I was to report for rehearsal tomorrow (Monday) at nine. He said he couldn't give me a salary for a week, but that on Monday, November twenty-fifth, I should begin with ten dollars a week, nearly twice what I am getting now.

Just to think! Tomorrow, I am to go in a theatre by the stage door and become a professional actress. I wonder if Paul will ever see me act. Poor father—he would have hated it, I know. I am sorry on his account. I do wonder, though, what Paul would think if he ever did see me act. I have not had a line or a word from him. Of course I broke it off—not he. That at least I am thankful for—if it had to be at all. I hope when he does see me—he will some day, I feel sure—that I shall have made progress in my (yes *my*) profession.

CHAPTER X

HIS LIFE'S WORK

But the saddest tale we had to tell,
Fol-de-rol, de rol-rol-rol,
Was when we bade old Yale farewell,
Fol-de-rol, de-rol-rol-rol.

The senior class was going home. It was singing together for the last time as it stood in the railroad station. Then a train pulled in bound north, and another train pulled in bound south. The men clambered into the cars, crowded the rear platforms and looked out from the windows.

As the trains began to move, and the distance between them widened, hands were waved, there were shouts of "Remember to write, Pete;" "Good luck and God bless you, Dick;" "Good-bye;" "Good-bye, old man;" "Good-bye." Then the senior class volleyed

out the long cheer for the last time, and when the distance between the trains was so wide that no human sound could bridge it, the senior class was no more.

"That's the last of Yale," said Carl, sighing.

"Yes—and now for life," answered Paul. They were sitting with Lassie Ellis and Billy Dunbar in the smoking-and-drinking car. The four planned to spend two or three days together at the Wildmerding New York house, which was empty except for the three servants who had been sent up from the country to care for the young master and his guests.

When they reached the city Paul was pleased to have the English valet who met them at the station take his bag and his trunk checks, was pleased to have his clothes unpacked and laid away, to have his bath run for him, to have his dinner coat laid out and the studs put in his shirt. When the valet had finished these devoirs, he inquired, deferentially, "Anything more, sir?"

"Nothing; much obliged."

"Thank you, sir," said the valet, and vanished noiselessly.

Paul meditated upon this answer, then laughed. "I fancy," he reflected, "that it is much easier to learn to do with this sort of thing than to learn to do without it."

While they were dressing, Carl went into Ellis' room. "Lassie," he began, "you know I've arranged to get Paul a job with the brokerage firm of Cowan, Eckstein and Saltonstall. Do you know any of them personally?"

"I know Saltonstall; Boston, isn't he?"

"Yes, they have a big Boston business, and he takes care of it. Cowan and Eckstein run the New York end. I picked out this firm for Paul, because they're young and ambitious and he has a chance to become a partner; and he never could with an old established concern. Cowan's a converted Jew. His father's name was Cohen, but the son has married a very nice, second-class Christian, the daughter of a cotton broker. The girl's really fine—very musical and talented and nice-looking, but she was never in things. She and Cowan run around with a set of their own, mostly converted Jews, and they're all as rich as mud. They have an enormous marble palace of a club of their

own, and they take their women there to lunch and dinner. They have some splendid country places scattered up and down the Sound, and yachts to carry them up to the city every day; for they seem to stay on the job in spite of their money. Cowan is a leader among the younger ones of that crowd, and they do a lot of their trading with him."

"Well, who's Eckstein?" sputtered big Ellis, through his shaving lather.

"Eckstein's a Jew, and he doesn't care who knows it. He isn't converted, doesn't want to be and never will be. He even speaks with a slight accent. I went down to his office a couple of times to talk about Paul to him. He's as smart as Muriel Evers looks driving that new cob of hers. He never quits working. He's not after society or pleasure or enough to retire on, nor anything else but cold, iron cash. He gets a lot of trade for the firm—a good many of the big theatrical managers of his own faith, a number of bookmakers, and he's used sometimes by the big firms of the street when they want to cover their work. But the firm is weak with our kind of people; and if they could get a line

into Newport and the Handball Club crowd, they'd be better developed all around."

"Now, if you and I boost," continued Carl, adjusting his black butterfly tie, "with the help of other Tong and Shovel men, we can get Paul into the Handball Club away ahead of his place on the list. He's as big an athlete as they ever had in there, and he's really a nice simple fellow, and all he wants is backing. Get Jim" (Jim was Lassie's older brother) "to shove him, won't you?"

"Sure," said Lassie, drawing on his dinner coat. "Let's have a cocktail."

Carl pressed a button in the wall. "We're going to meet Eckstein at Martin's after the show tonight," said he. "When you get a chance, tell him confidentially how much you think of Paul, and that Jim will help him into the Handball Club, and that you'll do what you can to get trade for him, and all the rest of it. If they think Paul's going to be valuable and bring a lot of orders into the house they'll start him off better. Savvy?"

The decorous servant tapped lightly at the door, then silently turned the knob and noiselessly entered.

He bore two gin and vermouth cocktails upon a silver tray. Lassie took one and gulped it down as eagerly as if his two and twenty years of splendid youth required an alcoholic crutch.

"Good cocktail, Winston," he addressed the servant.

"Thank you, sir," replied the menial, vanishing with the empty glasses.

"You know, Carl, I'll go the limit for Paul," continued Lassie. "You get to like a fellow after rowing with him three years on three winning crews, and being captain over him the last year. It's too bad, though, that he has to grind away in this filthy town all summer. I only wish he could afford to play polo. He'd be good in a year or two—eye and nerve, quick as a cat, and a horseman's shape."

After the roof garden, the four young graduates went to Martin's for supper.

Carl looked about, then walked over to a table where a lean, swarthy, good-looking Jew was sitting with a yellow-haired girl. "Hello, Mr. Eckstein," said he.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Wildmerding?"

answered the broker. "May I prezent Miss Montmorenzy?"

Carl bowed and said, "We are hoping that you and Miss Montmorency will join us for supper."

"Certainly, with pleasure. That is Mr. Ellis with you, is it not?"

Young Wildmerding smiled covertly. "Yes, that's my friend Ellis, and my roommate, Paul Potter, whom you are going to take into your office."

Mr. Eckstein said: "Won't you be zeated, Mr. Wildmerding, and have a little glass of wine?" Carl drew out a chair.

"Your friend, Mr. Ellis, is a son of Mr. Harvey Ellis, the steel man?" queried Mr. Eckstein, softly.

"Yes, his favorite son," answered the youth, blandly sipping his champagne.

But Miss Montmorency, who had had few chances to sup with two such golden youths, grew impatient. She signaled Eckstein with her eyebrows and arose. "Indeed, I should be chawmed to take supper with you and your friends." Then she and Eckstein and Wildmerding moved to the table where Paul, Lassie and Billy Dunbar were seated.

After the introduction, which Miss Montmorency acknowledged with exaggerated fatigue, in a dragging, throaty drawl, Carl and Lassie did their parts for Paul. They drew him continually into the talk, laughed at his jokes, told stories of his football, and made it plain to Eckstein that they were all three most intimate friends. Lassie confidently assured the broker that he could persuade his "old man" (Eckstein pricked up his ears at the mention of that mighty being) to give an occasional order through Paul.

The broker's eyes gleamed. He forgot to be annoyed at the rather silly, vinous remarks which Billy Dunbar was addressing to Miss Montmorency. If by any miracle old Harvey Ellis could be persuaded by his son (his favorite son, too) to give a few orders through Paul, then he, Eckstein, would see to it that the old man was so well satisfied that he would come back again and again—and that meant LOTS OF MONEY for Eckstein.

The next afternoon Paul went to the offices of Cowan, Eckstein and Saltonstall to be instructed by the second partner. In rapid purring sentences Mr. Eckstein instructed the

novitiate in the mysteries of the brokerage business.

"You have been in a country bank, Mr. Potter? Good. But the zituation is not prezisely the same here. We brokers all charge the same commissions for making trades—one-eighth of one per cent. And so the cuztomer has little to choose between us as far as rates go. The perzonal element enters. Brokers should therefore make friends with those who trade."

Mr. Eckstein then explained in considerable detail the nature and composition of the various cliques of people in New York who were in the habit of buying and selling stocks.

He pointed out that his firm lacked connections with fashionable society. He said it would have been desirable to the firm to have taken on a man who was a member of that set, but that Paul, with the aid of his influential young friends with whom they had supped last night, Mr. Wildmerding and Mr. Ellis, as well as with the assistance and friendship of Mr. James Ellis, Mr. Ellis's older brother (Paul was amused; he had never seen Jim Ellis), would doubtless, with perzeverance and patience, become a member

of the Handball Club and a friend to the gentlemen of the rich, gay, sporty young society set. Of course, if Paul only knew the women of that set, it would be better yet, as many of them traded a good deal, but since he did not, and since he was as yet inexpert, he would be started on a salary of twenty-five hundred dollars a year.

Mr. Eckstein was talking rapidly. He paused to light a big black cigar and to offer Paul one. "Now, that extremely handzome salary of twenty-five hundred dollars," he went on, "which we have decided to pay you, not for what you can do now, but for what you may do in the future, we are frank to say we expect you to spend. You must dress in swell style, and when you are with the young men whose friendship we expect you to gain, be generous to a fault. In fact, we are free to say that if you can demonstrate that you are invezting our money wisely in the making of a valuable friendship, we shall advance you whatever extra sum, in reason, may be required. You must economize when you are not in that company, but when you are with it, be generous, be free, be open-handed. It pays."

CHAPTER XI

AN HIERARCHY OF DESIRE

The four friends were sitting at a table on a New York roof, sipping bock beer, lazily watching the changing colors thrown by the searchlight through various-hued glass slides upon the tighted legs and flashing skirts of the black-faced Sambo dancers. The girls in tights, holding watermelons under their arms, made fantastic motions in their efforts to escape from the girls in skirts, who followed with a long, shuffling, foot-scraping crouch.

Big Lassie Ellis snapped his thick, strong fingers loudly. "Hey, waiter!" he exclaimed. "Bring me a pair of opera glasses." The waiter returned a sullen look to the peremptory tone; but, as he glanced at the tip before slipping it into his pocket, quickly vouchsafed an apologetic, "Thank you, sir."

The thick-shouldered oarsman adjusted the lenses with less than his usual stolidity, then smiled contentedly.

"I know a couple of 'em, Carl, though its hard to spot 'em under their war paint. How about going to supper with them?"

"Which ones?" queried Billy Dunbar, cautiously.

"The second Sambo from the left and the Dinah on the right end."

The other three in turn squinted through the glasses. "The Sambo for mine," chirruped Billy, "though it's hard to tell, with all that burnt cork on it, whether her face is pretty."

"It is," grunted Ellis, who was scribbling on the back of a wine list. "Hey, waiter!" The man rushed up. "Please see that Miss Cleo Baskerville gets this note; hurry back with the answer; and this is for yourself."

"Oh, thank you, sir."

"I say, Paul," whispered Carl, "I don't know whether I ought to go out to supper with those dolls, considering I'm to be married in the fall. Not that there's any harm in it, of course, but I might be seen. But you go with Lassie and Billy, and I'll give

you a latchkey, so you can come in whenever you like."

The waiter returned with a note. Ellis quickly tore it open.

"Cleo and Irene de Querouaille (that's a lovely name) will meet us in front of the ladies' cloak room at Dupré's at 11:15," explained Lassie, as he read. "Now, let's go to the Leopard Club for half an hour. It's right on the way."

As the rubber-tired hansom traveled swiftly and smoothly down Broadway's lighted lane, Paul sighed happily. "And this is the Tenderloin," said he to Billy Dunbar, with whom he was riding.

"The very heart of it."

"How many restaurants there are on this street—and hotels."

"Yes," explained Billy; "these restaurants and hotels are supported chiefly by westerners who come here for a week or two each year and blow in a big wad on chorus girls and then go home and kick about wifie's extravagance when she wants a new bonnet. Everything goes in these places, as long as you pay for it. Have you noticed, too, what a lot of jewelry shops? Well, that's the

way the big spenders do their courting. They have a daily paper here which comes out at 1 o'clock in the morning, when most of its readers are widest awake, with nothing in it except race horses and actresses. It makes good money, too."

Paul sighed again. He whistled softly the refrain from "Dick Whittington," which all the Tenderloin was whistling that summer. His dream city lay before him. Could he take it, as Whittington had?

The cabs swung down a side street and drew up before a tall narrow building. A servant in livery held the door open for the young men as they entered. "Good evening, Mr. Ellis; good evening, Mr. Wildmerding. Will you kindly enter the names of your guests?" he said, looking from one to the other.

They went into a very high ceilinged, oak paneled room, set about with small round tables, which, save for two other young men at the far side of it, was empty.

"This is the Leopard Club," explained Wildmerding; "it doesn't amount to much. It's only used by those just out of college, while they're waiting for the Handball or

Lion's Head. Lassie and I have been in it since we were sophomores."

"It's hot enough," said Lassie, wiping his forehead. "Let's have gin sours; they're cooling." The others nodded acquiescence. "Boy—four gin sours."

"Yes, sir," said the boy, and hurried silently away. Paul liked the club better than the restaurant. There was greater quietness and ease, less noise, more deference from the servants. Here Luxury seemed to sit on a more accustomed throne, to bestow her smiles with chaster reserve; while in the gaudy, too brilliantly lighted restaurants she gave herself readily and unrestrainedly to each raw stranger possessing gold.

When the glasses and siphons had been placed upon the table, Billy asked: "You're going abroad, Lassie? For how long?"

Big Ellis set his glass down and, lighting a gold-tipped cigarette, began: "Ever since I've been a little kid I've had certain ambitions. I never talked much about 'em. But I'll tell you fellows tonight, because it may be some time before I see you again. First place, I'd always wanted to kill a moose. Well, that's done. That fellow up there I

got last fall in Manitoba." He pointed at an enormous shovel-horned, proboscised head which hung over the mantel piece.

"But that's about the only one of my ambitions I ever achieved, except of course rowing on the crew," he went on. "I want to finish in the first flight in the fastest grass country of Warwickshire or Leicestershire. That'll be pretty hard, because I'll ride at 190. I'm going to try it late this autumn, anyhow. Then I want to climb the Matterhorn. Of course, lots of people have done it since Whymper, but it's nothing easy just the same. There's a pretty high percentage of casualties every year. I'll have a whack at that this summer. I'm also going to swim the Hellespont, not because it's particularly hard—for it isn't—but because it has had the name of being a good deal of a trick ever since Byron and Leander did it."

"You'll have lots of fun," suggested Carl, who, for his domesticity, would not be able to indulge the wanderlust.

"And then I'm going to have a try at something real—that is shooting a tiger on foot. I've wanted to do that ever since I read Kipling's story about it. Kipling's also

made up my mind for me to kiss one of those Mandalay girls; and on my way home I'm going to get some surf riding in Honolulu, and finish up next summer with a monstrous Kadiak bear in Alaska."

Billy Dunbar closed his eyes in pretended rapture. "Ah, what a life, Lassie. How I wish I could go with you."

"Aw, come off the perch, Billy," laughed Lassie, roughly. "You couldn't stand it off the cocktail route for two weeks straight. You'd look good going through a jungle of tall bamboo canes that radiate heat like steam pipes. Why, you'd melt down into a couple of pints of alcohol."

Paul flushed at the brutality of Lassie's remark, but Billy himself did not seem to care at all. He knew that he had been born weak and thin-blooded and without energy. He knew that he had been dissipating pretty steadily ever since his freshman year, and that his half-hearted efforts to stop himself had failed. His only pride in the matter was that, no matter how drunk, he always managed to behave quietly and "like a gentleman."

Ellis grew sorry for his rudeness to harm-

less little Billy, and, slapping him on the knee, explained: "I was only horsing you, old man. We have time for just one more. What do you say?"

"I think I can go another, thanks," answered Billy. Then Lassie passed around his gold cigarette case, and peace was restored.

He looked at his watch, then closed it with a snap. "It's quarter past, now, boys," he said; "come on, we don't want to keep the girls waiting."

As the party rose, Carl hesitated. "I don't know whether I'd better, Lassie."

But Ellis' domineering spirit was not to be denied. "You make me ache, Carlie. They won't eat you alive. Besides there are only two of them and four of us, and I guess the rest of us can guarantee your safety. How about it, Billy?"

He laughed as he shoved his mighty elbow heavily into Dunbar's ribs.

The supper consisted of various kinds of sea-food, cheese, coffee and much champagne. The girls talked a steady stream of slang, and the young men smoked a constant succession of cigarettes. Cleo early marked

Lassie for her own, but Irene set her eyes on Carl in vain.

Billy had grown quite drunk, but Paul, to whom this was a novel form of entertainment, kept his senses. "Here, Paul, old scout, you're shyin' your drinks. Come, that won't do. When you're with fren's—we're all fren's here, aren't we, Cleo?" boomed Ellis' bass.

"Yes, by Gawd, all friends here. Here's to friendship—may it live long and prosper." The girl raised her glass to the sentiment. A wisp of dyed yellow hair lay across one painted cheek. Her enormous black lace hat was a trifle askew.

"Yes, we're all fren's," Lassie's heavy voice continued, "and when in Rome do as the Romans do. What says old Omar—'Myself when young did eagerly frequent'; no, I mean th' other one. 'Come, Fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring your Winter Garment of Repentance fling.' It goes on like that. I forget the rest just now."

"That's a grand pome," volunteered Cleo. "I've always been dead stuck on it since you told it to me last winter; do you remember, Lassie?"

As the midnight hour passed and another day began, the steady, droning buzz of talk grew louder in the immense, high ceilinged, scarlet-hung room, the laughter was shriller, men's eyes duller, women's cheeks more flushed, neckties and picture hats fell aslant.

Carl spoke to Paul in an undertone: "Ready to cut home, old chap?"

"Yes."

The two arose. "Well, so long, boys," they said. Lassie sprang up and passed his arms about their shoulders. "Goo' night, old Paul; goo' night, old Carl; best fren's I have, 'cept Billy, here. He'll stay with me an' we'll 'scort ladies home. Be up to your house in a few minutes. Goo' night." Billy, sitting at the table, merely waved his hand weakly at them.

"Whew," said Carl, "that was rotten, wasn't it? I was a chump to go, but I'm glad I did, in a way, because it shows me there's absolutely nothing in it. And once I thought there was."

As they walked slowly up Broadway, the soft summer breeze entered their tobacco laden lungs, and their steadied hearts beat grateful thank-yous.

Crowds were streaming from scores of restaurants. Young men, their straw hats tilted back, their summer overcoats slung over their arms, laughed down the street, lightsomely. Middle aged men, jowled, paunched, empurpled, nature-tonsured, bediamoned, breathing heavily, standing on the curbing, holding firmly to pretty, young, white-clad women, waited for cabs to drive up and carry them away, Bacchanals beyond dancing.

The fire burnt in Paul's veins as he heard the rustling of women's dresses, the click-click of high heels on the pavement, as he saw the huge lace hats nodding above the smiles of scarleted lips. "So many girls," said he, "what are they like?"

"Just what they look," answered Carl; "it's a case of money. What else could such a raving young beauty as this brown-haired one we are passing get out of the disgusting old Falstaff she is with?"

Money again. Money was the ultimate, controlling, over-shadowing, resistless power. It gave to its possessor dominion over men and over women. Paul would get money. He would work his fingers bare and his eyes

blind, so that he could get money quickly, so that a girl as beautiful as the brown-haired girl they had just passed might hold to his arm as he walked down Broadway at 2 o'clock in the morning.

He strode along humming. He clenched and loosened his hands so that his great biceps coiled up and relaxed; he stiffened his shoulders and the splendid rowing muscles of his back stood out hard and rigid under his black coat; he breathed to the bottom of his deep lungs; his legs seemed made of steel cords, so fast and tirelessly did they bear him.

It amused him to picture how the laughing pleasure seekers, who were brushing him by so carelessly, would stop and stare in awful admiration if Omniscience should suddenly make known to them the destiny which was in store for him.

The next morning Paul had a headache and his blitheness had departed.

As he lay in bed, miserable, he began to appreciate that after all he had treated Sylvia rather badly. His eyes had become opened; he seemed to have a fuller, completer knowledge of life and its meaning. After

all, was not love the one thing worth while? Could a man climb to power over a murdered love and so find happiness?

Would he not be better off in a little cottage with Sylvia, in Darbeyville, working quietly and unostentatiously, returning home in the twilight, and going to bed early, to a long, dreamless sleep? Then all about would be green and sweet quietude, instead of the hateful, deafening, maddening clatter of hoofs upon the asphalt of the city street. Those painted, noisy, vulgar girls at supper —how hideous it all had been.

Carl entered fresh and rosy from his bath, the water dripping from his hair upon the collar of his silk dressing gown. He lifted his voice and piped:

"The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at 'leven;
The hillside's dew pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world."

"Oh, cut it out. I feel like the ragged edge," growled Paul.

"I'm merely quoting you Mr. Browning, on the morning after. Wait a minute, though, and we'll fix you up." He touched the button. "Bring Mr. Potter a dripped absinthe," he said to the servant.

"Oh, Lord, no; what do you take me for? I can't look another drop of booze in the face for a month."

But, over-persuaded, finally he emptied the glass of the cool, opaque, grey-green liquid. His raw, aching nerves were numbed by the narcotic, and his spirits rose. Resolutely he thrust his visions of Sylvia into the background, to be evoked no more until in his next moment of depression, sickness or unsuccess, his sore spirit again cried despairingly for peace.

For as to Sylvia, so he steadily told himself, that part of his life was settled. To regret her was weak; to remember her was dangerous.

CHAPTER XII

RACQUETEERING

Five years later Paul was a successful broker, a member of the firm of Eckstein, Saltonstall and Potter.

Through the kindly influence of the Ellis brothers and Wildmerding he passed safely through the exclusive portals of the Hand-ball Club, far ahead of his place on the waiting list. He found it gave him a certain advantage to room at the club, and he made it a rule to spend the hour before dinner in the cafe where, taking cocktails and talking of plays and players, polo and yachting, the opera and opera invitations, house parties and hostesses, he cemented friendships with rich young men whose friendships might bring grist to Eckstein, Saltonstall and Potter.

For ever underneath the light talk of their

amusements, the serious thought of the young men lay upon stocks, which Midas-like could gild and glorify their pride, their power, their pleasures, passions and position.

The sun and the wind touched the bosom of the earth to her awakening, crops sprang forth abundantly to the tillage of millions of men and horses and machines; grimy gnomes toiled in the dark underground to bring fuel to the light; keen-witted and resourceful railroaders guided their lightning caravans across continents; children of five years spun clothing for the race; and the two and one-half hundred young aristocrats of the Hand-ball Club guessed about the prices of stocks, in the happy compact with Fate that if they guessed wrongly they need but draw a check or two against bank accounts which had descended upon them freely and copiously, like manna, from the days of their minorities; and that if they guessed aright they might still farther extend the wide boundaries of their superfluities of luxury and brighten the eyes of their lights-of-love with pearls, diamonds, furs, men-servants and high-stepping horses.

In those days the air of New York was

electric with tips. A trust had been made yesterday; another one was forming today; a third was rumored for tomorrow. Stories were told of headwaiters in hotel cafes who, through overhearing the dinner conversations of promoters, had multiplied ten fold in ten days the earnings of a lifetime; of show girls with salaries of twenty-five dollars a week, who had wormed commercial secrets out of their drunken lovers and garnered tens of thousands of dollars; of fifteen-year-old broker's messengers who had won enough to start in business for themselves on the curb. The whole community was enviously inflamed; and most of it joined in the grandest, completest, best equipped and most seductive gambling game of which history makes record.

Paul was a capper for that mastodonic gambling game; but he did not find it necessary to go out into the highways and byways to seek gamesters. They sought him.

Let us follow him through two hours of a winter afternoon, which was like the afternoons which had come before and like those which would come after.

At five he played racquets, a game for

which his plastic, symmetrical, obedient muscles and accurate eye for distance served him well. Few could beat him when he extended himself. Yet he lost at times to inferior players. It was agreed by the other racqueteers that he was a good sportsman, who, winning or losing, laughed cheerily.

On this afternoon Paul managed neatly to lose a close match to a young plutocrat whose heart lay much in the game.

After their showers, Paul called across the locker room, in a voice from which nearly every trace of Indiana had been elided, "I say, old man, the drinks are on me. Shall we have them here or down stairs?"

"Down stairs. We did have a close time of it, didn't we? I thought, when we had a game apiece and you ran up five points before I had one in the rubber, that, etc., etc."

"Yes," agreed Paul, warmly; "you showed plenty of nerve to come from behind that way."

When they had seated themselves at a little round table in the cafe, the young plutocrat asked, "Aw, by the way, what do you think's the market outlook?"

Paul leaned across the table toward his

companion, and half whispered: "Market was strong, braced by Southeastern. Pete Laidlew, go-between for Duer Brothers, has been spending a week end with old Ferguson on his New Jersey estate. If old Ferguson and the Duers will only stop cutting each other's throats, Southeastern is bound to—" here Paul threw his hands upward with an expressive gesture. Pause. Then he resumed: "Of course, too, you noticed last April's report: gross receipts 12 per cent higher than any previous April."

"Well, you think it's a pretty good buy, then?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," responded the cautious Paul. "We do a strictly commission business, you know. We're not tipsters. We don't want you to invest except as a result of your own judgment."

"But what do you think, personally, not as a broker, but just as a friend?"

"Well, personally, I'd buy S. E. But mind, I don't advise you, old man."

"Oh, of course not. I understand. Well, I tell you what to do: Buy me a couple of thousand shares at the market tomorrow and

hold it until further orders. Ten points margin.''

Paul appeared to hesitate. ''Of course, if you don't *care* to buy it outright—but it's my opinion you'll be safe with ten points. We'll be glad to execute your order—and much obliged. Hope you'll have good luck with it. Dining here tonight?''

Paul's tone was casual, but his heart rejoiced. He had lost two games of racquets and two Scotch highballs, but he had won an order, and perhaps a customer. Success, as he knew it, had visited him that day.

By the beginning of his sixth year as a broker, he was not indeed Harvey Ellis' right arm, nor even his left, but one of the hundred arms which that Briareus of speculation used to strike, to feint, to mystify, his antagonists in the battles of the street. These hundred arms of Harvey Ellis knew not the strategy which moved them. Often he set two to fighting with each other, while a third, fourth and fifth moved independently of each other to the true point of attack.

Paul was now making between twenty and twenty-five thousand dollars a year. He was credited with an income of from fifty to sev-

enty-five thousand. He felt that the time had come for him to go into society.

He had shown a wise restraint in checking his impatience for this ultimate adventure until his fortunes were established. The temptation had been keen and constant for him to essay his wings earlier; for, with the backing of the Carl Wildmerdings, he would unquestionably have been asked to many houses whose front doors frowned savagely on the usual climber.

But he knew that, as long as he was rated at ten or fifteen thousand a year, no mother for whose opinion he cared would have permitted his serious attentions to her daughter. And with the mothers opposed to his advance he realized that his every effort must be vain. For it was a woman's game entirely—and the older, wiser women, the mothers with daughters to marry or sons to keep single, directed the game of Spend and Catch, which is Society.

But now Paul was believed to be winning fifty thousand dollars a year in Wall street. So he felt that he would be welcomed to pay his serious court to all but the very pretty or very rich girls in society.

Racqueteering

Carl, now as always his staunch and loyal friend, no sooner received the vaguest intimation of what was passing in Paul's mind than he invited him for a two week's cruise on his yacht, the Capuan. Billy and Katherine Dunbar, Jim and Lassie Ellis, Mrs. Evers and half a dozen others—maids, men and matrons—were to make up the party.

They were to meet at the Holland House Saturday morning, coach to the racetrack club-house, lunch there; thence, after the races, to the Capuan, which lay off the New York Yacht Club wharves, and dinner on board.

"Carl is a mighty good friend to me," mused Paul, as he accepted Anita Wilmerding's invitation, "a mighty good friend—I must be careful not to lose him."

CHAPTER XIII

SPORTSMEN AND SPORTSWOMEN

The luncheon on the club-house verandah was very gay. The people were young, the sun was bright, the breeze was salt, the chef had been faithful, the wine steward constant, the servants obsequious.

An expensive and elaborate machinery of production had been evoked to design for the young women of the party garments which beyond all doubt were amazing in cost, and which the fashions of that season as certainly pronounced beautiful; the happy accident of ancestry had crammed the pocket-books of the young men of the party with gold certificates to wager upon the fleetness of the toy horses and the knowingness of the jockeys. A great spectacle was in preparation to gratify a great passion of mankind, and Paul was to view that spectacle as a courtier

in the shadow of the seat of Emperor Lucre, the Sempiternal.

Not without pride did he help that lady of the court, Mrs. Richard Evers, to her seat beside him at the luncheon table. Not without pride did he glance from his place in the club-house across the picket fence to the huge grand-stand filled with packed nameless plebeians. Not without pride did he turn his careless back upon the spectacled young woman who was inscribing on a pad of paper for publication in the society columns of the morrow's metropolitan press the names of the guests at the races of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Wildmerding IV.

The greater courtiers, older in service, higher in rank, would now and henceforth acknowledge him as a new member of their order—a novitiate.

He was admitted, but he must remain humble, grateful for the fact of his bare admittance, for he was poor in money, to their counting. He realized that until he could pile his golden heaps upon golden heaps he must smile to their sneers and humble himself to their quiet scorn.

Yet he was content. For obscurity among

them was effulgent to his spirit; their greetings of half disdain filled him with a sweeter rapture than the applause or gratitude of the humble could ever have vouchsafed him.

For he was a little brother of the rich.

Anita Wildmerding possessed social instinct, and in the selection of her guests she had skilfully recognized even the most vaguely defined of those new interests of the season, concerning which even the whispering had not yet begun.

It was almost her obsession to observe and minister to the ripening of mutual charm between those pairs of men and women whom she had invited as her guests, so that they might portray to her untiring morbidly keen observation and overpowering delight some new manifestation of the great basis of drama.

Muriel laughed as her sister expounded her plans for the yachting party. "Anita," said she, "you would have been a superb matchmaker—better than mamma—if you would not always do your scheming to help people who are already married."

"That reminds me," replied Anita, "that I have a favor to ask of you. Carl has in-

sisted on inviting one of his college friends, his old roommate. You remember him, don't you? The tall chap you danced with so much that time we went to the Prom. Paul Potter is his name, from Indiana. There are two or three extra men, so you needn't be bored with him all the time, but when you are in the way of it be nice to him, won't you?''

''Oh, yes; I remember him. A very good looking boy, and rather agreeable in his gauche fashion. I am rather bored nowadays. One young man is becoming really tiresomely *exigeant*. Yes''—her grey green eyes danced—''I will be nice to Carl's ward. I really was becoming so bored with that *exigeant* young man.'' She smiled. Anita shook her finger; then Muriel laughed.

The feature of the racing day was the ten thousand dollar Firenzi stakes for three-year-old fillies, at one mile and a furlong. It was fourth on the card. The Ellis brothers had won the opening scramble for two-year-olds, but had nothing in the Firenzi.

Wildmerding had entered two—Delight and Ecstatic—and they were installed by the bettors as favorite—9 to 5 against the entry. Captain Alaire, a tall, straight, slender man

with iron grey hair, a great sportsman and racing-man, was sending to the post a brown filly—Queen of Hearts. Her chances were lightly thought of, for 10 to 1 and 4 to 1 were laid against her. Her jockey wore all crimson; the Wildmerding colors were green and gold. Nine were carded to start.

The betting ring was jammed as soon as the odds went up on the stake event. Coatless, sweating, straw-hatted men fought each other to reach the bookmakers' booths. The roar and drone of those who were struggling for a chance to draw near the gambling stands sounded like a heavy, veersome wind whistling through wet-leaved trees.

Only the book-makers, who lived in such scenes, were calm. One stood on the low step in front of each little booth, holding a sponge, a piece of chalk and a pair of field glasses. With the glasses he could decipher the figures on the rival blackboards clear across the three hundred foot roofed enclosure, superheated by the packed-in bettors. Quietly he stood marshaling the passions of the pushing, heaving crowd beneath him.

The entry, which opened at 9 to 5, was

backed down to 8 to 5, then to 6 to 5. The crowd felt ludicrously sure that one of the two Wildmerding mares must win. Many who had gone to the track doubtful, as soon as they saw the wild betting on Delight and Ecstatic, became positively convinced. Clerks who, meaning to bet a dollar in the field books, had slipped out to the races, hoping that neither their wives nor their employers would find them out, found themselves swearing bitterly as they jostled each other in their anxiety to reach a book-maker and hand him a ten dollar bill—half a week's salary—with the hoarse words, "Entry straight."

There was nervousness in the grand stand and nervousness in the club-house porch when the bugle sounded and the nine silken equine toys, ridden by little boys or weazened men, pranced out.

Wildmerding and Captain Alaire studiously preserved the appearance of calm. They laughed as the little jockeys tried to line up the curvetting, hypersensitively organized thoroughbreds shoulder to shoulder for the start, but Carl's heart was beating double time. He swallowed the lump in his throat and held out his hand to his rival,

saying, "Well, Alaire, may the best filly win."

Alaire laughed pleasantly: "Certainly, certainly, old chap. And I hope if it's not to be mine it may be one of yours. I should like to see a gentleman win the race." (The owners of the other six horses in the race were professional horsemen, who trained their own horses instead of hiring it done.)

It meant a great deal to Alaire to have Queen of Hearts win. He had bet $2,000 against $19,000 on her, and the race itself was worth $10,000. He was an extravagant man who had always lived beyond his income, and this $29,000 which Queen of Hearts might bring him by less than two minutes running around the oval track would help him through the present season.

The slender fillies, mincing and waltzing, almost as by coincidence fully aligned themselves. A couple of mighty springs from the haunches and quarters of steel, they had struck their stride and bore down torrent-like by the starter, who stood on a little platform fixed on the inner rail. "Go!" he yelled. His assistant dropped the red flag with a swish, the immense crowd in the

grandstand stood up, a mighty synchronous roar arose, "They're off!"

Anita Wildmerding stood leaning upon the railing of the club-house porch, straining upon the race, her lips parted, her breath coming fast. On her left was Alaire, his tall, slender, graceful figure tightly fitted into a grey frock coat, a gardenia in the button-hole. On her right stood her husband.

Paul stepped back to stand upon a chair behind the three, for it was hard to see over the huge nodding plumes of Anita's hat. As he stood behind her he observed that her white sleeve was pressed, as if in sympathy, against the grey sleeve of Alaire and not against Carl's short brown one. It seemed strange to him that at a crisis of this sort she should apparently have taken sides against her husband and with his rival. Perhaps, he mused, they are rivals for more things than the Firenzi stakes; and he set himself to watch a play more fascinating than that of the thoroughbreds, which now for the first time swept past the grandstand, a whirling mass of dust speckled with the brilliant colors of jockey jackets.

At the far turn a pair shot out of the ruck.

One jockey was all in crimson, the other wore green and gold. The crowd began to yell. Some at first screamed "Ecstatic!"; others implored, "Come on, you Delight"; but only a few called for Queen of Hearts, for few had bet on her. The jockey in green and gold was carried by Ecstatic; Delight was already beaten.

As the two leaders on even turns swung into the stretch, Paul saw Anita seize Alaire's hand. But that gentleman did not turn his head for even a glance; his soul lay a furlong up the race track, where a negro boy, dressed in crimson silk, was flogging and spurring an exhausted young mare.

The noise from the bettors in the grandstand was that of a thousand cataracts. "Ecstatic!" shouted the people, snapping their fingers and weaving their bodies back and forth with each jump of the filly.

But Ecstatic did not win. At the finish wire the lean head, the blazing red nostrils, bulging eyes and dripping mouth of Queen of Hearts showed three feet ahead of the favorite.

Anita now put her slender white-gloved

fingers upon her husband's shoulder: "Hard luck, old boy," she whispered, "it's too bad."

Then she said to Alaire, extending her hand: "To the winner. Queen of Hearts ran beautifully, and we both feel that if we had to be beaten, we are glad to be beaten by you."

Though the words were simple enough, the glance of radiant delight which she shot at him was clear in meaning to him. When he took her hand and answered, "Thank you, dear lady, you indeed are very kind," he knew that she would know he was thanking her for her glance of radiant delight, and not for her simple words of congratulation.

When the result was officially announced from the judge's stand, Carl, who had entertained a last hope that Queen of Hearts might be disqualified for short weight, walked into the cafe, seated himself at a little round mahogany table and ordered a drink of rye whiskey from a servant who, to mark his servility, wore evening clothes in the afternoon.

At about the same time, in the plebeian grandstand, many another bettor, who likewise had been waiting in the hope of Queen

of Hearts' disqualification, now edged his path to the long raw pine shelf against which men were pressing three deep, and behind which sixty coatless, sweating bar-tenders struggled to keep up with strident or sulky orders for beer or whiskey. No mixed drinks were served. There was not time to mix them.

CHAPTER XIV

TARRYING IN THE CAPUAN

The long June day's light was faint and dying when the Capuan exchanged with her sisters, the kept pleasure-craft of the masters, four rich-toned double-strokes from her bronze and silver bell.

The yachts, which had been held leashed in the harbor, their prows pointed seaward by the flowing tide, now began one by one, as they slipped their anchors from the mud, to drop slowly down the river to the sound.

Beautiful, graceful and bedecked, they proceeded in their pride, a sterile fleet, hetaerae of the sea.

Daintily and with disdain they seemed to glide around the ugly, uncouth, dirty working ships, but they saluted with sweet courtesy the terrible great darlings of Mars, which were the valeted bucks, just as they were the

painted belles, of that darkening salt water city.

The mate, a blue-eyed Swedish adventurer, called out his orders, not without decorum, to a crew which had been collected from all the white man's world to take Carl Wildmerding IV a-yachting; while the big Danish bo'sun drew his silver whistle from the breast pocket of his clean, fresh, white duck sailor-suit, cut low in the neck, comic-opera-wise, and smiled as he piped, remembering that little bit of floating hell, the coasting schooner Savannah, in which he had made one voyage, which was not decorous, under this same blue-eyed mate.

The Chinese stewards, robed in flowing blue silk, served the before-dinner cocktails to the ladies and gentlemen of Carl's party, who, freshly groomed by body servants, lounged against the rail or sprawled in steamer chairs. The mighty engines turned over the twin screws, which kicked up hostile diminutive maelstroms, and the Capuan moved toward deep water.

The mate's shoutings ceased; the constant jangle of the engines ended with the final tinkle of "full speed ahead"; the watch set-

tled down to its four hours' work; and dinner was announced for the ladies and gentlemen.

The ocean lay, a vast pane of iridescent glass in the late dim twilight, smooth, opaque, glistening, purple and green. The steady, muffled throb-throb of the engines, coming as regularly as the ticking of a watch, soothed nerves which had been frayed by the noise and hot glare and bitter emulation of the race course. The slant-eyed stewards, in their rapidity, silence and perfection of service, seemed like genii of Aladdin's wonderful lamp, in being only to obey and anticipate the wishes of their masters.

"Ah, delight, pure delight, is it not, my friend?" began the musical voice of Muriel Evers, as soon as the diners were seated and she found herself beside Paul. "What could be more perfect? This truly is the very last word in living."

"Oh, yes," said the man, vaguely.

She feared she had seemed over-earthly, and corrected herself: "Of course I mean as far as *things* go. The pleasures of the intellect, of reading and studying the mighty thoughts of mighty minds, the contemplation

and possibly, for some of us, the understanding''—she spoke reverently—''of the true Art of the world, the happiness, ecstasy and unalloyed self-abandonment of a great love, a love of understanding and mutual helpfulness,'' she sighed, ''all those things are the deep happinesses of lifetimes. So you mustn't think that when I speak of this breeze and these stars and the almost ghostliness of this scene, that I mean merely the material fact of a steam yacht, well equipped and spacious. No, I have a sense rather of etherealization, of dematerialization, as my spirit seems to move, for the time, unweighted, free and disembodied, over the face of the waters.''

She paused and sighed again. The faint prophecy of coming tears proclaimed itself from her great eyes. Since Paul had flirted with her at the Yale Promenade half a dozen years before, she had changed. Then she was a light-hearted, pretty, gay and attractive young woman. Now a little older, the slightest bit thinner, her lips more redly carmined, tiny lines appearing about her eyes, she was to him more charming because of

"THE VERY LAST WORD IN LIVING."

her greater seriousness, because of her sadness.

They talked to each other almost steadily through dinner, which was served on deck. They dealt in abstractions, in generalities as to love, life, duty, religion. When they touched on religion he was skeptical, she believing. This difference seemed only to make them more in sympathy, for he was drawn by the sweet femininity and trusting faith of her outlook.

Rather early they reached the worn enigma: If a married person finds himself or herself desperately and deeply in love with some one other than wife or husband, what should that married person do?

They agreed at once, "He or she should try to forget." Then they modified the original problem, "Suppose he or she has tried to forget as hard as possible and without success, what then?"

To which Paul shrugged his shoulders, saying, "Well, after all, we have but one life to live."

Muriel made no answer, and Paul turned an emboldened gaze to her.

There was a silent lull. Lassie Ellis' deep

voice was heard, "Yes, she worked five furlongs in one, two and a half yesterday, just breezing, just breezing, her mouth wide open all the way."

Katherine Dunbar murmured, "How extraordinary, wasn't it?"

Across the table Mrs. Alaire was saying to Jim Ellis, "And after Dwight had brought her home from the opera at two in the morning, with her hair all disheveled, I shouldn't think Pierre would *ever* have had him in the house again; but after a month Dwight was there just as much as ever, and he and Pierre are perfectly good friends. Of course they didn't suppose Pierre would have been there when they got home, but I *do* think the way those two are carrying on is pretty flagrant. I am very fond of Patricia, too; I went to school with her."

At the other end of the table Carl was talking of bulldogs: "A son of King Lud's Prince out of Brassbound Lassie by Duke Rabagas, that won everything at Crystal Palace both in '88 and '89. Oh, he's bred from the purple. He'll win in the Garden this fall with an even break. He cost the Governor $4,000 to import, you know."

As these snatches of talk reached them, Muriel and Paul looked deep into each other's eyes. "They don't understand, do they?" she whispered.

The banality of the others struck him in that moment. "No," he answered, gravely; "they don't. But may I ask you one thing?"

"Yes."

"You're sure you won't mind?"

"I won't mind."

"Does *he* understand?"

She turned her head away from him, looking silently across the dark waters. For a long time she gazed. Then her lower lip trembled ever so slightly; she shook her head in gentle negative sign. Paul's heart leapt within him.

After dinner, bridge was started in the cabin. But Paul and Muriel found it pleasanter to stroll to the bow, bending over the rail side by side, their elbows barely touching as they watched the knife-like cutwater of the Capuan sever the gentle waves. Captain Alaire and Anita Wildmerding placed steamer chairs in the shadows on the lee side.

When the first rubber was over, Lassie, noticing the absence of the four, leaned over

to Katherine Dunbar and whispered, "The Devereux girls are up to their old tricks. Did you notice the drive Muriel was making at Paul at dinner, and now she's up on deck looking at the moon with him. She always did like good-lookers. I'll bet he'll be her new one."

"Yes, and Carl's uneasy because Anita's up on deck with her old one. He'd like it better if she would only follow sister's example and take a new one every little while."

The girl smiled meaningfully, then gathered in her cards expertly, sorted the suits dexterously in her hand, and play resumed itself.

CHAPTER XV

SUFFER, LITTLE CHILDREN

"Do you know we're flat broke, Kate?" said Billy Dunbar to his sister as they walked the deck together next morning. "We're not getting twenty thousand a year between us, and we spent thirty thousand last year. I don't see a possible place to cut down. If you can't manage anything with Lassie, for heaven's sake look somewhere else. You and he have been playing around together for five years now, and nothing comes of it."

"Three," corrected the girl. "His trip around the world took two."

"Well, you don't seem to be accomplishing much."

"He likes me as well as any girl, I think."

"Like, like, like—what if he does like you? The point is, will he marry you?"

"How much did you have to drink last

night, dear?" she queried, softly. "You've been overdoing it even more than usual lately, it seems to me."

"Oh, quit nagging, Kate. Whenever I give you a little good advice, you don't take it in good part. Tell me, how soft does Lassie ever get with you?"

"Oh, he's been pretty soft two or three times late at night, after gay parties, when he's had a good deal of champagne."

Billy pondered: "Most every night will be a late one on this trip. And here you are thrown together steadily. It's now or never. If you can't make it this time, you're pretty damned footless."

Katherine was wroth. "I like the calm way in which you expect me to do everything for the family. You say I shall marry this man, for whom I haven't a spark of sympathy—he is wrapped up in racehorses and shooting, eating and drinking—and you swear at me because I don't marry him so that I can pay some more of your debts. I am willing to marry him, if he asks me——"

"Willing to!" ejaculated Billy, impatiently. "Good Lord, that's a good one—'Willing to.' What girl in town isn't willing

to marry Lassie Ellis. You'll have to get together better than that if you expect to land him."

"I can't kidnap him, you know. But if he asks me this trip I'll take him. I'll give him every proper encouragement, too. But this is the last time. If nothing happens before we leave the boat, I'll lead my own life hereafter and see the men and women I like."

"Meaning Darlington, I suppose," sneered her brother. "A middle-aged artist, a widower with two children and hardly a penny. Well, you will be making a fool of yourself."

"I don't know," the girl flashed back; "if that would be making more of a fool of myself than to marry a man I don't like, in order to pay for the alcohol you're killing yourself with, and your mistress' dresses." Billy winced visibly. The girl went on: "Oh, I know more about you than you think, and you've got to stop your bullying."

"I'm sorry. But, Kathie"—he put his hand on her arm and pleaded—"we've simply got to have the money. I have been borrowing. If he gets soft again, won't you please, please try to make it happen?"

"Yes, I said I would keep trying until this trip is over; but it's the last time." She walked to the railing and leaning over, spat into the blue water. "Faugh!" she exclaimed; "Billy, that's what I think of it all —and of you."

Katherine kept her promise. The yacht touched at Sterling-by-the-Sea, where Saltonstall, Paul's partner, had arranged a dinner dance for the Capuan's guests.

In the afternoon a Watteau fete was given on the lawn of Aspinwall Cromwell Monk, of Boston, for the benefit of the Anti-Vivisection Society, representing a cause in which Mrs. Monk, a gentle woman, and the owner of prize winning Airedales, was almost devoutly interested.

Few there were among the summer residents of the North Shore more exclusive than Mr. and Mrs. Monk. Artists and musicians were sometimes admitted to their circle to be patronized for a brief period, but, excepting these fugitive concessions to genius, the Monk portals were closed to all but the Brahmins of Boston or Boston's suburbs, and to a very few outlanders besides, such as the Dunbars, but not such as the Ellises.

For the Boston Brahmins had flung out their banners, as yet with success, though from year to year with a lessening defiance, against the ever reinvigorated, never despairing assaults upon their close positions of New York's new rich, who were so very new, and so very, very rich.

For Brahmin Boston's instinct warned that once these new people were welcomed as equals, quickly they must be owned as superiors—they were so very, very rich.

It was the dreadful younger generation knocking, knocking patiently and so persistently at the door. It was the dreadful younger generation which soon would enter and dispossess. Therefore let the opening be postponed until the last minute allowed. When that minute expired, what could half a score of colonial ancestors who had been buried in the seventeen hundreds avail against forty millions of fertile dollars alive in bonds and tenements? So keep the door closed, tight closed, until the knocking threatens to become a battering, until at least tomorrow.

But the Watteau fete was for anti-vivisection, and, after long meditation, Mrs. Aspin-

wall Cromwell Monk drank her sacrificial cup, declaring to her friends that it was her duty to dogdom to open her door a little way, and for but a little while, to the new people.

And so did many an eye along the north shore of Massachusetts brighten on the morning when for the first time the long hoped for, long denied "Mr. and Mrs. Aspinwall Cromwell Monk request the pleasure of your company" dropped from the cream colored invitation envelope upon the happy breakfast table.

The stage of the Watteau fete was the green velvet slope of the lawn, separated from the audience by an arrangement of shrubbery and stucco work; the wings were trees and bushes.

Katherine Dunbar and Lassie Ellis found seats side by side. As they passed Mrs. Monk, busy with cares of superintendence, Katherine greeted her. The Boston lady regarded her doubtfully.

"How do you do, I am so glad you could come," was her uncertain greeting.

The girl laughed pleasantly. "You don't remember me, I am afraid, Mrs. Monk."

"Really, I am sorry, but I don't."

"I am Katherine Dunbar."

"Little Kitty Dunbar! My child, I am truly glad to see you. Of course I didn't remember you. You were a school girl the last time I saw you, and now you are grown up. My dear, I must see you after all these people can be got rid of—" she waved her hand disdainfully at her guests who had come to pay. "I really want to talk to you. I knew your grandfather — a gentleman of the old school. Ah," she sighed, "in these days of mushroom fortunes and parvenus we see few such men." Then she hurried off, before Lassie had been introduced to her.

"Funny old bird, with her smoothed out grey hair and lorgnettes. She has the Hahvahd accent all right. Seems to think a lot of herself, don't she?" commented Lassie a trifle sulkily.

"Oh," explained Katherine, "Bostonians have quite a different standard from ours."

The opening scene of the fete was laid in ancient Arcady. A stalwart young man in white fleshings, with a leopard skin fastened about his shoulders, entered from the left, leading three lambs, their tails wound with ribbons. The procession passed to a shady

spot where a bundle of newly cut grass and wild flowers had been prepared. Here the young man threw himself down and began to pipe on the double reed flute of a faun.

A girl in flowing white peeped around a tree-trunk at him. The shepherd, espying the wood-nymph, pursued her. A little boy of six, representing the god Eros, shot blunt arrows after them from his Indian bow.

Lassie guffawed. "Will you please look at Dexter Hollister, dressed in tights, chasing that girl in and out of the bushes. Why, I've seen that fellow play the neatest first base Harvard ever had; and now watch him making a four-ply monkey of himself." And he roared with laughter.

There were games of battledore-and-shuttlecock between court ladies and court gallants, who were brought to the turf stage-center in sedan chairs; then an eighteenth century minuet; there were Gypsies, troubadours, Pierrots and Pierrettes. Finally at the end Mr. Monk, wearing short buff breeches and a blue coat, read one of Chaucer's poems, in Chaucer's accent.

If Mr. Monk had had to know enough about the English language to earn his living by

his learning, he might have been a scholar. But, unforced by necessity, he had remained a dabbler and a patron, who flushed under the praise of a young Harvard instructor for his "truly excellent reading and interpretation of olde Geoffrey."

When Katherine, who likewise had devoted many odd moments to such word-dabbling and who knew the terminology of the sect, murmured to her host. "So truly done, so bravely," he put his two soft hands over hers and said, "Thank you, dear Katherine, for your quick appreciation of a really honest effort."

And in his mills in South Carolina on that same scorching June day, in the mills which he entered not over once or twice a year, two hundred children were burning out their little lives in order that his palms might be softly white, and that he might play with Chaucer.

When she left Monk, Katherine's trained eye sought Lassie, who had strayed off to sign his name with three figures after it in a book which stood open on a table in a tent decorated with photographs and pen sketches of dogs in torture.

Deftly she reannexed him, stopping from time to time to greet acquaintances.

"Why, Lassie," she said, "there's Sally Pym, my roommate at school." Now the Pyms were not only Mayflower families, but the very first of the Mayflower families, the priests of the priests.

"Hello, hello, Sally," exclaimed Katherine as a pretty young girl all in white approached, "I'm so glad to see you again."

"Well, Kitty, this is a delight. How do you happen to be in this simple little place?"

"Oh, just off the yacht," laughed the New York girl, jigging a couple of hornpipe steps.

"Not that immense steamer in the harbor?"

"Yes, the Capuan. Miss Pym—Mr. Ellis. Mr. Ellis is with us on the Capuan, Sally."

Miss Pym had heard stories of the immense and continued display which the Ellises made in New York and Newport. She bowed coolly to Lassie, then turned again to Katherine, leaving him out of the conversation. He was annoyed. There were now none in New York—there had been none for ten or twelve years, almost as far back as he could appreciate such things—who bowed coolly to the Ellises.

Katherine suddenly interrupted:

"Oh. there's Mrs. Hampden; I must go

see her. She used to visit us when I was a little girl. Good-bye, Sally. See you at the Saltonstall's tonight?"

Lassie removed his hat silently and as they made their way across the crowded lawn, muttered to Katherine: "That Miss Pym will do—just take it from her."

Katherine smiled. The game was moving. "Oh," she exclaimed gently, "they have different—I mean funny—ways of looking at things in Boston. They insist on old family and all that sort of thing, you know. That is, the older people do. The younger ones are more liberal—much the same as in New York. How do you do, Mrs. Hampden? I shall venture to say that you do not remember me."

"Indeed I might not have, little Kitty Dunbar, if Mary Monk had not told me you were here. But now I recognize you perfectly. How well you look. And how is Billy? Is he here? Really? Ah, Kitty, I often think of your poor grandfather. One of the most distinguished men I have ever known. A gentleman by birth, breeding and education. Ah, yes, the times have changed."

"Mrs. Hampden," said Katherine, "allow me to present Mr. Ellis."

"How do you do, Mr. Ellis?" Mrs. Hampden bowed. Then after a few more words with Katherine, and a slight nod to Lassie, she departed.

Sitting beside Katherine in the stern of the launch which was carrying them out to the Capuan, that they might dress for dinner, Lassie was visibly in no pleasant frame of mind.

"These New Englanders are a lot of fossils, anyway," he commented.

"Yes, they're more old fashioned than anybody—except of course some of the Philadelphia and Baltimoreans who are actually worse. Heigh-ho, what does it matter?" She laid her gloved fingers momentarily on his arm. He felt that she was sorry for his uncomfortable experience, and from his heart he thanked her for her tacit sympathy and understanding.

During his attentions to her in New York, neither of them could help feeling that he had everything to give which counted, whereas, she had nothing to offer but herself. Here, among the Bostonians, she had

shown him that she possessed advantages of position which he lacked; and he valued her the more highly for the demonstration.

CHAPTER XVI

THE OLDEST PROFESSION

Lassie took a cocktail on the boat before starting shoreward to the Saltonstall's; he took another while waiting for the announcement of dinner, and helped his way through the half dozen courses with as many glasses of champagne. Without the stimulant, and with so much food, he would have been dull and uncomfortable. But the combination was effectual in lending him a feeling of well-being. He was satisfied with his looks, with his talk, with Katherine who sat beside him and who seemed to understand him.

The light of the huntress shone in her eyes. Never had he stalked a wild animal with more predaceous joy than she now stalked him. She had promised herself and Billy that there should be but one more Lassie-hunt; and she was determined to keep that promise.

But what a hunting this last Lassie-hunt should be. There stood the huge quarry, his confidence lulled, fearing no foe, glorying in his security, almost within reach. A few more cautious movements, a sudden surprise and the head of the herd, the biggest stag of them all, with countless golden tines upon his gleaming antlers, was hers, under the very eyes of less skillful Dianas who had spent many weary years in the same quest.

There had been many moments in her life, when she sickened of the Lassie-hunt. Sometimes when, in Darlington's dim studio, the harp's sad music drifted her out upon the illimitable, hazy, twilight, spirit sea; sometimes when she strolled quietly alone in her little rose garden on the Hudson, her long skirts slowly trailing behind her; sometimes when her pale emotions livened at the vision of deep lustred pottery, she felt the falsity of it.

But tonight she was among women whose bare necks and slender fingers were laden with jewels; eating from gold enameled porcelain, with heavy, carven, silver tools; dreamily inhaling the faint scent of orchids, while the zither's lark-like notes floated from

their hidden birth-place among the palms and dwarf banana-trees of the conservatory. To-night she rioted in royal purple, and wanted it forever. She bade silence to the kindly voice which admonished her that a gentler color was her truer destiny.

The men went to Saltonstall's study, when the eating was over, in order that they might continue the drinking for a brief period, and smoke. Lassie took two small glasses of cognac, a Scotch whiskey and soda, a cigarette and a cigar. When he had knocked the last ash from the black Havana, drained the last drop from the long highball glass, he arose, shook his trousers down his heavy legs and yawned.

"Well, there's the music. Suppose it's time to dance. Lord, but it's hot tonight. Hope my collar don't wilt the first round, but it feels as if it would."

It did. And when he brought Katherine back to her seat, he asked, "Mayn't I get you a little punch? It's fearfully hot in here."

"No, thanks," she answered, fanning herself. "But do you go and get yourself some. Then you may take me out on the lawn for a few minutes, where there is a nice breeze, and

your duty to me for the evening is over. I'll wait for you here." She nodded smilingly, and he made his way to the punch bowl, saying, "Back directly."

Billy dropped into the vacant seat. "Having a nice time?"

"Yes."

"How is everything?"

"Well enough." She spoke curtly. Then an idea struck her. "Billy, we're going out on the lawn for a while. We'll be in the summerhouse. Come out in twenty minutes or half an hour and look for us. But come quietly, probably from the side instead of the front. It would be better not to walk on the gravel path; stay on the grass. Do you understand?" She looked at him from narrowed eyelids.

Billy pondered a moment. "I'm blessed if I do." Then quickly he laughed. "What a clever little girl it is. Depend on me; I'll come, and carefully. Here he is, coming back. Good luck, Kathie; you're a trump. Hello, Lassie. I've been flirting with my sister; now I must be off. S'long."

Ellis and the girl took seats in the little vine-clad summer house, facing the sea.

"A fine party, so far. You've looked awfully well tonight," he began.

She remained quite silent.

"Isn't it a beautiful night? Look at the moon on the water," he said.

"A perfect night," she answered simply. "The most perfect night I have ever known."

His pulse began to throb. What did she mean by that? How spotless and how pure she seemed sitting there, all in virginal white; how unapproachable, how different from other women he had known—how desirable. His blood began to course.

"I feel it, too," he answered hoarsely.

As she raised her bare arms to adjust a comb which had come loose in her hair, her elbow touched his shoulder.

He took a long breath. "Do you know," said he, "the thing I like about you is that you seem to understand me? When I am interested in something, I can talk to you about it better than to any other girl I know."

"Indeed I am happy if that is so, Lassie," she answered softly, "happier perhaps than you can imagine. But I am always really interested in what you tell me, and that is why I seem to understand."

Their eyes met. Hers were glowing. A little more time, a little luck and the game was won.

He placed his hand over hers. She did not move. He put his arm about her waist and drew her to him.

"Oh, Lassie," she said, "Do you really care, for if you don't, I—" sob. Trembling, she yielded him her lips.

The fever was in his veins. "Care, Kathie? I love you. Kiss me again. Don't you know that I care?" The storm of passion raged within him. The moonlight on the sea, the pale girl in his arms, the champagne in his blood drove him on. He tightened his grasp of her and pressed his burning lips to her hair, her eyes, her mouth, her bare neck.

A voice interrupted, "I beg your pardon. I did not know anybody was here." A man's figure stood but a few feet from them, half turned as if to retreat again. He must have seen them while they had been in each other's arms.

As the girl, startled by the voice, looked up, she was recognized.

"Katherine," said her brother very stern and hard. "What are you doing here?"

The girl arose, miserable. "Why I—why we—why I—," she faltered wretchedly.

Lassie stepped forward firmly. "You have found out our secret a little ahead of time. Your sister is going to marry me."

He turned to the girl. "Do you mind, dear, if other people know, now that Billy has found us out?"

"No, I suppose not," said she with beating heart. The golden antlers were hers.

Presently they returned to the brilliant light of the dance and Billy hurried to Muriel Evers with the news, to insure its rapid spread. Then he made his eager way to the punch bowl. After a time, quite incoherent with joy, he dropped into a vacant seat, beside Katherine.

"Oh, you dear, sweet lil' sister," he babbled. "I wanta' take you out on the porch and give you a brotherly kiss. You're a credit to the family."

"No, thanks," she answered incisively, "I have already had enough alcoholic kisses for one evening."

When the darkness of that night finally broke, sleepless she raised her weary head upon her hand, so that her aching eyes could

see, through the round porthole of her cabin the reddening horizon.

"Anyway," she sighed, "Lassie played fair when his time came; and I shall be fair enough by him to stay bought—always."

She shook her head slowly with the mournfullest smile, "So, after all, I am to be richer than Anita Wildmerding."

CHAPTER XVII

A MITIGATION OF BOREDOM

"What a wonderful time it has been," whispered Muriel. "And tomorrow we take up our separate paths again through the cruel, gossiping, brutal world; tomorrow begins again the same deadly round of luncheons, teas, drives, dinners; tomorrow we step out of this garden of cool shade and perfume into the full glare of the noonday sun, shoulder our packs and trudge along the dusty highway. Ah, Paul, but if tonight were our last night upon earth, and we were to face Almighty God with our sins hanging heavy upon us tomorrow, I would not regret having known you—and having loved you. Maybe we shall not meet again; maybe this good-bye is good-bye forever; maybe it is best that it should be so—best for each of us. But the memory of these days with you upon the

Capuan will leave me never. We make mistakes; we are poor, weak, erring, sinning mortals. But when into the midst of my unhappiness and wretchedness, and you alone know how unhappy and wretched I have been, the vision of perfect Love entered and beckoned to me, I was not strong and wise and brave enough to run away. I followed, and I am glad I followed. I could not help following because I was only a woman, and you were a man, such a man, the man. Ah, may God forgive us."

The woman was leaning her elbows upon the deck-rail, looking over the phosphorescent, dark waters, listening to the throb of engines, and the gentle wash-sh, wash-sh of the waters slipping by the white flanks of the yacht.

The man could see with what an effort she was fighting back her tears. He placed his hand over hers. "How cold you are, dear," he whispered. "Look"; he pointed at the most brilliant point of light which, within the arc of their vision, pierced the purple blackness of the sky. "That is Venus, hanging straight before us. Trust her."

"Was she ever to be trusted, Man?"

laughed the woman lightly. "Perhaps after all we were taking ourselves a bit too seriously."

"Kiss me, dear," he said.

The next night, Paul and Carl sat together in the smoking room of the Wildmerding Newport villa. The dinner guests had departed. A footman, liveried in green and gold, entered carrying a silver tray, laden with bottled soda, long tumblers, cracked ice and a carafe of Scotch whiskey.

"Not for me," Paul shook his head emphatically.

Wildmerding mixed the whiskey and sparkling water, and put it to his lips. "I'm going to cut it out tomorrow, too," said he, "but I feel nervous tonight."

"I feel nervous, too," answered his friend. "I've been sleeping badly the last few nights and I feel as if I should sleep worse tonight.

"Try sulphonal."

"No, I'm willing to pay and have it over with. The two weeks aboard I can only see now through a yellow haze of highballs and fizz. And at that I think I drank less than any man in the crowd, except possibly you."

"Sulphonal will make you sleep; and you'll

be jumpy tomorrow if you toss about all night," insisted Carl.

"I'm leary of drugs, to tell the truth. I think it's better to stand the gaff tonight and tomorrow. Then, the day after, I'll be about all right again."

"Sulphonal isn't harmful, I tell you. It's not a dope in the sense you mean," said Carl. "Lots of people take it. Anita does, and Muriel has for years, whenever she couldn't sleep. It never hurt them a bit. I'm just as set against drugs as you; but more people than you would guess take it and don't seem to go under. Look at Billy Dunbar. I can't see that he's a bit worse off. He doesn't drink nearly as much as he used to, and he doesn't make an ass of himself half as often."

"Do you mean to say Billy dopes? I never guessed it."

"You're one of the few that hasn't, then," answered the young millionaire. "He's been using morphine for a couple of years. But his system was so accustomed to all kinds of nerve stimulants that the poison won't act up to its full power on him. It's like trying to burn wet wood. Then again Alaire's wife's

been doing it for years, and everybody knows it. She used to be a great girl with a horse, hunted the stiffest country of Long Island and Warwickshire, but now she never rides. She affects languor, dreamy eyes, world weary and all that sort of thing nowadays. It takes two maids to keep her tidy, though."

Paul poured himself out a whiskey-and-soda. "This doesn't seem so wicked now," he laughed. "But I don't think I could stand the sort of racket we've been having the past two weeks very long. After this night-cap, I chop."

Little Wildmerding rose to his feet and drew his slender short body to its full height. He threw out his arm vehemently. "I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going home; and I'm going to start right now. I am sick of all this rotten boozing and dressing and lugs. I've stood it just about as long as I can for this time—and I need a rest. You're my best friend, and I'll take you home with me. We'll start right off on the Capuan and be in New York tomorrow."

Paul gaped with astonishment. "What are you talking about, boy? We've just come off

the boat, and you're home now in your own house in Newport."

Wildmerding had been striding up and down the polished floor, muttering to himself.

"HOME," he suddenly burst out, "HOME," do you call *this* home? Do you call it home to live in a marble palace with a woman who would only bear you one child—and that one's dead—for fear of missing a season and spoiling her figure; who tells you to your face in her tantrums that she only married you for money; who considers you nothing but a combined pearl fishery and diamond mine, who spends her time with—Oh, I'm not such a fool as she and everybody else think me. What I know about her would surprise her. No, I have been long suffering and silent, but I have a home, as different from this as heaven from hell, where there is a woman that understands me and loves me. And I have friends, a few of them, real friends, for they don't know that my father has money and they're unlike these friends and toadies and servants and sycophants about here, who pretend to like me for myself, but who wouldn't give two hurrahs for me if I were John Smith.

I know, Paul Potter, I know. Don't interrupt me, because I KNOW, I tell you," his voice had reached a scream. "Of all my friends here, I think you are the best. I think you like me for myself. I THINK so"—a look of suspicion flashed into his eyes, then faded —"but God knows, I don't KNOW even that." The slender, little fellow sank into a heavy leather arm-chair and began to sob heavily.

"Oh, come, old man, this will never do. Let's go out for a turn up and down the terrace." The tall man laid a kindly hand on the other's shoulder.

"No," insisted Carl, his voice shaking, "I'm going home. You can come or not as you like." He touched the electric bell. "I want Winston," said he to the green and gold livery.

The valet knocked and entered, "Yes, sir?"

"Winston, we'll be going back to New York tonight on the Capuan. Let 'em know aboard. Steam's up. I told 'em I half expected to go out again tonight."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you want to come or not, Paul? Do just as you want."

"I'll go, if you are going."

"Winston, Mr. Potter will come too. See that his things get back on the boat. And I'll leave a note on this desk for Mrs. Wildmerding to let her know. See that someone gives it to her in the morning. I'll take you as far as New York, and leave you there. I'm going out in the country for a week or ten days. Send this telegram there—night message, so as not to wake them."

"Yes, sir. When shall you go aboard, sir?"

"Half an hour."

"Yes, sir."

At 2 A. M. the Capuan was under way, her steady engines shoving her a good thirteen knots an hour into the teeth of half a gale.

"I feel better already," said Carl cheerfully. "The skipper says it looks like nasty weather before morning. I rather hope we do have a little blow; it won't bother my sleep any. The skipper says he'll stay on the bridge as long as we have the point on our lee. I am glad of it. He's a very safe man —strict teetotal, and all that sort of thing. A good man; I was lucky to get him. Well, let's turn in."

Before morning a full gale was blowing,

but it blew harmlessly by the strong, graceful vessel, conducted by forty-five sea experts—navigators, engineers, quartermasters, able-bodied seamen, deckhands, oilers, stokers. The forty-five fought the gale all through the night, and the next afternoon their labors fruited, for little Carl Wildmerding was landed safely on the wharf of the New York Yacht Club.

"Quite a turn-up we had for the Sound last night," he commented. "Hope you weren't uncomfortable. But I've found that, nine times out of ten, it's pleasanter to come down this way. We've an hour and a half to catch our train to Wissacon. Come, let's get a cab. I'll be a busy man until the train starts."

He laughed and took out a slip of paper from his pocketbook. "This is what I have to get: Five magazines, including especially the Ladies' Own; a box of chocolates, a basket of peaches, a rubber doll, a pair of long, very long, garden shears, a Smithfield ham, a pair of hammock rings, and six yards of blue ribbon to match this."

In the station, Paul had set his foot upon the step of the vestibuled parlor car, when

Carl seized him gaily by the arm, saying, "No, my son, day coach, just ahead."

"It's about time for me to explain," he continued when they had found a seat and he had carefully lodged his bundles in the rack above their heads. "You are going out to Wissacon to spend a week or ten days with Mr. and Mrs. Carl Chester. I am Mr. Chester."

"Oh," said Paul.

"It will be a quiet, peaceful, early to bed and early to rise existence. Mrs. Chester will not permit a drop of anything to drink in the house."

"Oh," answered Paul, surprised.

"Our cottage is very small. It gets pretty cold sometimes in winter, when the wind is wrong for the furnace. But I'm getting onto that old furnace now," he added. "We have a vegetable garden, a cow and a maid-of-all-work. Blanche has limited the budget to twelve hundred a year, and we've never been over the limit. Queer, too, considering she knows all about father."

"Oh," interjected Paul, amazed.

Wildmerding chuckled. "It looks a little as if she cared for me, myself, doesn't it?"

"It decidedly does."

"That's why I call it home, and not the other place. When I met her, she was doing the tough girl in Ten Beauties and One Beast, three years ago."

"I remember the show—musical comedy at the Casino, wasn't it? I remember her, too, clever and slangy."

"That's Blanche. She had some real comedy in her, which might have been brought out. She was made up ugly as sin on the stage, and in fact she isn't a beauty off it. But she has the honestest smile in the world. I met her at a supper Lassie and Jim gave. Each of them had a girl in the show. I was taken with her; she was just as funny then off the stage as on it, though she's sobered down since. I was feeling pretty blue and discouraged—nerves off, I presume—so I saw her again; and pretty soon I bought her a couple of pins and a ring. Believe it or not, but she is my first and only since marriage."

"Of course, I believe it, old man."

"Well, things went on for about a month; and after a while we got to really like each other. She wanted to quit the show business and go into the country to live, so I bought

a little cottage in Wissacon, and she seems perfectly contented with it. I've been on the square with her, and I've been a better fellow for knowing her—a lot better," he insisted earnestly. "Here's our station. Carry some of these bundles for me up to the house. We don't ride in Wissacon, but walk like the other commuters. I'm known in town as a traveling man for a woolen house. That explains my absences. I wish there were fewer to explain."

A dozen Wissaconites had come from the city on the same train as Wildmerding and when they caught sight of him in the little station, they greeted him warmly. "How-de-do, Chester, glad to see you back"; "Say, Chester, you must come over to supper before you go on the road again"; "Why, why, here's old Carl Chester: I am glad to see you; you've been away over a month this time"; "Your missus brought over the best fig-layer cake I ever tasted to our wooden wedding celebration last week. She was sort of hoping you'd be here in time for it."

The millionaire walked smiling and laden with bundles up the board walk toward his

cottage. "Those men were all friendly, weren't they, Paul."

"Of course, why not?"

"Well, what I like about it is that they are friendly to Chester, not Wildmerding. I know it's liking for me, and nothing else."

"Carlie, you make me unutterably weary. You're fearfully morbid. Take a liver pill."

"I'm not morbid here, ever; but I am there. How can I help it?"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MAKING OF A MIME

Flowers grew in the front yard before the little house in Wissacon. A woman, wearing a pink sunbonnet and white dress, was bending over an old fashioned garden of pansies, nasturtiums and mignonettes, plucking the full blooms, and placing them in a wicker basket. The brick wall leading from the picket gate to the front door was bordered with tall hollyhock and larkspur.

As the two men paused by the wooden gate before entering, Carl whispered, "Tell me, did you ever see a stone or combination of stones—rubies, emeralds, sapphires, pearls, diamonds—so deliriously beautiful in coloring as this garden?"

"No."

"Neither did I. Neither did anybody else. Yet I've spent over a hundred thousand dol-

lars on stones for Anita and under a hundred for this garden. Blanche has had more fun out of these flowers than Anita ever had from her necklaces, stomachers, tiaras, pendants, pins and rings. The whole business seems sort of funny, doesn't it?"

The woman looked up from her work in the garden.

"Hello," Carl sang out.

She smiled and her fingers went to her lips. "Sh-sh-sh," she whispered, pointing toward the baby carriage on the porch. "Why didn't you let me know you were coming on this train? I would have walked down to meet you. I am getting some flowers for supper tonight."

"Mrs. Chester—Mr. Potter."

"How do you do?"

"How do you do? Wait a second. Let me put the baby inside, and then you men can sit on the porch and smoke until the sun goes down. She'll be awake soon, anyway. She'd overslept as it is. Look; isn't she strong? Only ten months old. Sh-sh-sh; I'll be back in a minute. Excuse me."

After their very short and plain supper was over, the woman said, "Go out on the

porch again." She laughed. "It's the best room in the house these summer nights, a better room than the oh-so-grand people have ever managed to build for themselves. Is it not so, Carl-of-mine?"

"Of course, dear, — I know these things now, though I didn't once. You taught me." He turned to Paul, smiling, "Come old man, let's go out to our best room and smoke."

As they paused in the little library to get cigars, Paul looked about. There were a good many books, bound variously and worn, as if they had been bought one at a time and used. The furniture was chintz and wicker. The walls were hung in green and white.

Carl pointed to the baby grand piano. "That's been our one extravagance," he said. "I gave it to her last Christmas. She plays pretty well; has a natural aptitude. She carried the chorus of Ten Beauties and One Beast, before she got the character part."

In his casual stroll about the room, Paul's eyes suddenly lighted upon a large framed photograph, placed on the bookcase. "Why, who on earth's this?" he exclaimed.

"That's a friend of Blanche's—an actress. Blanche swears by her, says she will be heard

of some day; of course I hope so. But Blanche is enthusiastic in her friendships."

"It looks exactly like a girl I knew once. Exactly, only a little older." Paul was holding the photograph to the light that he might see it better. Presently he sighed. "How beautiful she is. Look."

Carl looked over his shoulder. "Yes, she is handsome, certainly."

"Handsome," Paul burst out abruptly. "Handsome; she is beautiful, absolutely, perfectly, flawlessly beautiful. Look." He laughed consciously. "Come on; let's smoke."

As soon as Blanche came out upon the porch Paul asked her about the photograph. She smiled. "Most everybody wants to know about that picture," said she. "Her name's Cynthia Castleman; and she'll have it on the four sheet posters some day."

"Cynthia Castleman, Cynthia Castleman. Then I am mistaken. But she looks for all the world like a girl I once knew."

"That's her stage name; her real name's Sylvia Castle and—"

"Yes, that's she, that's she," Paul inter-

rupted eagerly. "Tell me all about her. I want to hear. We are old friends."

"I first met her in a store in Chicago, where we worked together in the basement, or rather cellar, one summer. It was hell in that cellar. Later she got a little part in a stock company that was showing in the town. Fourteen shows a week, and rehearsals. After about a month I got in the company, too. We got ten a week. The manager and leading man was Henry Leamington. Did you ever hear of him? No? I guess he was before your time in New York."

Paul winced. "What about him?" said he.

"He's one of those nice-fellow-pity-he-drinks Indians. All on velvet when he's sober, but every so often he just naturally tosses himself up in the air. He kept hold for six months after I signed with his company. He can act. At the end of that six months we were turning 'em away every night from our little north side house. Sure-enough folks came to see us. There were as many carriages in line as at the downtown theaters. The papers said it was a case of the recrudescence of an artist. Everything was boosting his game when one evening he

started out to see if he could get outside all the booze on Clark street. I guess he managed it all right at that—he was a very earnest man. Anyway not long after he dropped out of sight. Sylvia and I got our notices—"

"How did she—Sylvia do? Was she a good actress?"

"No, of course not," said Blanche. "She didn't know anything. And she didn't seem to care much either, except she was glad to have ten instead of six a week. We roomed together and had three nice little rooms and a bath. We were a whole lot better off. The raise of your wages from six to ten a week is the biggest kind of a raise. You can live three times as well on ten as on six."

"What parts did she take?"

"Oh, she had good parts now and then. It was a small company and we changed the bill every week and when there were several important female characters, Sylvia or I had to get in. But she wasn't much account for a while. She just walked through her parts; and got away with it because she was so good looking and graceful. I had to act because I was neither."

"Come, come," laughed Carl. "No fish-

ing allowed on these premises under penalty—"

"But Sylvia always attracted attention, though she wasn't acting a little bit. I've seen her get a hand for nothing at all but looking like a beautiful hard luck story, while I was working my head off to a cold house.

"It wasn't until 'Wife or No Wife?' that she woke up. At the opening of that, one Monday evening, she hit us all like a cyclone. She reminded you of a tigress held back by chains, like you've seen in pictures, and fighting like mad. If anything she overdid and put in too much color and passion. She made all the rest of us look pale and bloodless like a lot of walking women. The regular leading woman, Miss Dorcey, was off that evening and Sylvia was understudying her. In the last scene, between Leamington and Sylvia, the whole company was hanging in the wings, knocked silly. It was as if a statue suddenly came to life. She had been so mechanical and lifeless until then—and now she had that big crowded house in her hands. After the final curtain we all clustered around her and Leamington, in the center of the stage to hear what he'd say.

"He seemed quite solemn and just gulped for a while. Then he said, 'Girl, you have the making of an actress, and I thought you were only a show girl. Work hard, work hard, for it is in you.' Then he walked off quickly, blowing his nose—and his eyes were pretty bright.

"She was still breathing hard from the scene; her hair was tumbled all about her; and her eyes just glowed and glimmered and burned. We all broke out together then, and shook her hands, and the women kissed her, but the only thing she said was this: 'This is the sixth of February. I knew how to play a deserted woman tonight.' "

Paul drew hard at his cigar, and kept silent. Carl had been watching him intently during Blanche's recital, then leaned over to him and whispered, "I couldn't for the life of me tell where I had seen that face before. So it was that nice girl you had at the Prom?"

"Yes," Paul nodded uneasily.

Blanche interrupted her narrative to watch the men. She could feel that they were talking of her friend. A discord had been struck, out there in the beauty of the starry night,

which shocked and jarred and wholly broke the harmony of their pleasant communion.

Carl rose suddenly. "Excuse me a minute, dear. I want to find that old college scrapbook of mine. Do you remember where it is?"

"It is on the bottom shelf of the bookcase next the dining room door. It's lying on its side, under that folding checker board."

Carl went in the house and soon called back to them, "All right, I've found it—wait half a second and I'll be out again."

Presently he emerged, his face rather set and grave. "As I thought," he said.

"What?" asked Paul with a voice of anxiety.

"The date of the Prom in our senior year —February sixth. Go on, Blanche, with your story."

The woman divined. Paul Potter, the man sitting here beside her, was the one secret in the life of her friend into which she had never penetrated. With an unforced access of dramatic power, she resumed:

"Her first performance in 'Wife or No Wife' was her best. After that she lost some of her naturalness. But that whole week her

work was way above anything she'd ever done before.

"The next week we put on 'Dishonor,' and blessed if she didn't repeat. She made half of the women in the house cry when she came to the part where she learned of her brother's disgrace. She didn't have the lead, of course. Dorcey recovered mighty quick when she heard about Sylvia's Ivonne in 'Wife or No Wife,' but even then Sylvia made the sister, Marianna, stick out way above Dorcey's sweetheart. They called her back after the final curtain three times with Leamington and still kept a-clapping. Then he said to her, 'Go on, my dear, take this alone, it's yours.' And she went on and made her bow. You ought to have heard the reception she got.

"She came back all a-tremble. Leamington kissed her on the cheek right before us all and patted her hand and said, 'There is much unhappiness in store for you because you are going to be a great artist. Mark my words, ladies and gentlemen,' he said to the rest of us, 'this young woman is going to be seated with the immortals.'

"Well, we all felt sort of solemn and looked at her as if she were something new. Then

he said, 'You acted well today, as well as half of our second class stars.' At that some of the radiance left her face. 'But you acted amazingly well for a beginner, which of course is all that you are, a promising beginner. You must work, work, work, catch those flashes such as you showed in the last act today and make them your obedient servant, always prompt to your call. Now they are but fugitive visitors, which come and go as they like.'

"Then one of the boys in the company said, 'How did it happen today, Cynthia; another date?'

"Everybody smiled, but when she said in her solemnest tones, 'Yes, it is the thirteenth of February. I have been thinking and I couldn't help showing how a woman feels when dishonor comes to the men of her family.' Well, of course everybody roared at that after what she said about the sixth of February the week before.

"Then someone said in a sepulchral voice, 'Lord deliver us from next week's show, if this thing is going to grow on her.'

"We all choked then and Sylvia laughed too after a while, though you could see that

she didn't like it at first. After we got home she told me what she meant—that her father was discovered to be an embezzler just one year to a day before."

"Let's see," said Carl, "that was six years ago last February, wasn't it?"

"Yes," answered Blanche.

Again Carl leaned over to Paul to whisper, "And six years ago last February fourteenth, you finally decided to take a position in New York. Don't you remember it was St. Valentine's Day and you told me something about wanting that job for a Valentine?"

Paul did not know what to say, so he merely took his cigar from his mouth, knocked off the ash and regarded the glowing end solemnly.

"Don't you remember?" persisted Carl.

Paul bowed his head with shame, with shame because he had been discovered in a shameful act by one whose favor he feared terribly to lose.

Blanche, after a pause, continued: "When the twentieth of February came, we were all teasing Sylvia about it, but the night before was the one Leamington had chosen to begin his spree; and after he was out of the way

Miss Dorcey soon got the management to give Sylvia her notice. I handed mine in then, because it was such a raw deal. Her only fault had been in working too well. Leamington never showed up at that theater again. He just went plumb out of sight.

"We hunted around the agencies for jobs, but it was late in the season, everything taken, and companies disbanding every now and then out on the road and drifting to the cities to look for work. Finally, though we booked in a chorus and finished out the season with The Swinging Girl."

"The chorus?" interrupted Paul. "Did she wear—ah—tights?"

"Yes, she did."

"But I can't imagine her doing such a thing," said Paul.

"You can't, eh?" returned Blanche, angrily. "Well, she wore 'em anyhow—and was glad of the chance. They were turning away a dozen girls for one they took. She needed work. So did I. We hadn't been getting rich on ten a week, you understand."

"No, I suppose not," agreed Paul with evident uneasiness.

"You're right, then. But she didn't like

the musical business. She couldn't get interested in chorus work after those big days she had had with the old stock show. Besides that, the men fussed with her a good deal."

"You mean stage door Johnnies?"

"No, I don't mean stage door Johnnies. They can't hurt anybody that don't want to be hurt. I mean the insiders. Seemed as if everybody from stage hands up to the manager was after her."

"Well?" asked Paul.

"Well, there was nothing to it, for them. So they held her back; though, as far as looks and action and voice went, she ought to have had a part, sure. But she didn't even get an understudy. She kicked to the manager, and he put his hand on her shoulder and said, 'You know, dear, nothing goes for nothing in this business.' She tumbled and quit. Oh," said Blanche, "a musical show is a pretty punk place for a pretty girl." She sighed ruefully. "And for a good many as well that ain't so darn pretty."

Carl laid his hand softly over hers. She smiled at him a little sadly, and continued: "The next season the two of us managed to get twenty-five weeks' booking in vaudeville

in a sister act—song and dance. We got seventy-five a week for the two of us, but of course we only worked half the year, and we had some long jumps to make, so the car fare pretty near ate us up, and the end of the year we were as flat as ever."

"What a life for her to lead," said Paul. "I remember her as such a different girl—esthetic, spiritual, over-refined, always petted and looked out for, and dependent on others. And that she should come to tights and song and dance. It seems so strange to me. I can hardly understand it."

"Don't make any mistake about one thing," Blanche interrupted in quick anger. "Don't you ever make any mistake about one thing, and that is, she's *good*. I know. I was her partner three years and I've heard about her since. She's straight as a string, and I don't want to hear anybody even thinking she ain't."

"She may not have gone the whole way—but she's gone some of it."

Then Carl broke out, for it seemed every stone thrown at Sylvia struck Blanche as well.

"For heaven's sake, Paul, don't justify yourself so. Who started her, anyway?"

"Do you ever go to see a song and dance or a musical comedy, Mr. Potter," inquired Blanche with bitterness.

"Yes, of course."

"And you pay admission, don't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, it's you and other men that make girls wear tights. Girls don't wear 'em for the fun of it, but because you men pay 'em to. And they've got to have money to live. You pay a girl six or eight dollars a week in a store to stand up all day and sell goods till she's ready to yell at night she's so nervous, and you offer the same girl eighteen a week to wear tights and dance and sing in a chorus. Do you wonder that those that can, choose the chorus. Let me tell you one thing, Mr. Man. If I had it to do over again, I'm damned if I'd ever go into store work at all—I'd light out straight for the chorus. We women 've got to do what you men want us to, to live anyhow—and it seems you like us better in the chorus—you pay us three times as much for showing our legs as for selling your wives hardware—I'm sick of all this

bunk about the chorus girl—Let me ask you one thing: which is the decenter proposition, the girl on the stage who's working for her living—and working hard, too—or the rich loafer in the bald-headed row who comes night after night to look at her—and tempt her if he can?"

"We-ell, I hadn't thought of it just that way, but there's surely a good deal in what you say. I guess women are better than men anyway," said Paul, sighing. A little glimmer of love, of regret, was beginning to flicker in the foggy shadows of the selfishness of his soul.

"That they are," said Blanche promptly.

"That they are," echoed Carl.

"Go on with your story about her, won't you please. I will not interrupt with disagreeable and ridiculous comments any more," entreated Paul.

She continued: "It was hard work in vaudeville. We did three turns a day. We worked most of the next season together, too, but we weren't anything special, I guess. We both sung well enough, but our dancing was sort of hazy in spots, and we saw we'd run into a blind alley. We'd never go much fur-

ther. So I went back to musical work. She got into a repertoire show that was playing the Canadian Northwest. She told me afterwards it was pretty tough. One night stands, and she did three-quarters of her sleeping lying half-cramped in a day coach seat with her satchel for a pillow. The work was so hard she couldn't learn anything. She got her lines and let it go at that, not trying to act them.

"She was pretty blue and forgot, a good deal of the time, what Leamington had said after 'Dishonor' that thirteenth of February. But she remembered it sometimes, and that's what saved her."

"Saved her from what?"

"From losing her ambition. The next season she signed up with Frawly."

"You don't mean Charles Frawly?"

"Yes, *the* Frawly, Charles Frawly. He was taking 'Put Yourself in His Place' on the road after its two years' run in New York. He wouldn't take his original company. Frawly always was a saver, so he got in a lot of cheap people. Sylvia had luck for once and got the ingenue, fifty dollars a week. I guess Sylvia's looks counted with Frawly

when he saw her. That's what they say about him. She wrote me it was heavenly peace after Canadian repertoire. One little easy part to get, hardly any rehearsals, and nice gowns to wear. They stayed a week in most places, too. She sent me a lot of her notices. She seemed to be going pretty strong with the papers and the public; and I guess she was going pretty strong with herself, too, about then. Anyway, she wasn't reading much of anything but the show papers, and you've got to keep a-reading, to climb. Her face was carrying her along and she wasn't doing much to help it. That was when this picture was taken."

"I should think her face would have carried her along," commented Paul.

"But that was bad for her. Anyhow, one day down in New Orleans she ran into an old tramp on the street, and it was Leamington. She gave him some money and told him to get a bath and a shave and suit of clean hand-me-downs, and take her out to lunch. He came looking a lot better, but blear-eyed. They had it out for a while, and of course he took the pledge again. She talked to Frawly and he said he'd give Leamington a try for

old sake's sake. They'd come out as young stars in New York at the same time, twenty years ago, you know, and they do say that Leamington had the edge on him, till booze cut into the game. The end of it was that Frawly said he'd pay Leamington's salary to Sylvia and she was to keep it back till the end of the tour, so's he wouldn't get full. But he didn't get full even at the end of the tour. He banked his money. That was over two years ago and I heard he hadn't a drink since."

"How do you account for it?" asked Paul.

"Because he's in love with her. He wants to marry her; but she won't.

"Well, the next season they went back to stock in Kansas City, but now Leamington gets rights on new plays sometimes, instead of just working out the old ones. That way he keeps a piece on for a month or more, instead of just a week. He's afraid that when they change every week Sylvia won't have a chance to get the fine points, the little bits of business that make the difference between a passable and a big performance.

"It's all Sylvia with Leamington now. That whole stock company is nothing but a

dramatic school for her. The other actors are only her props. He don't pay much attention to their work, and he don't pay much to his own, but worries himself sick every performance watching her get through. Sometimes the critics roast him for being dead and hold up as a contrast the exuberant bounding vitality of that splendidly promising young artist, Cynthia Castleman—but it never even feazes him. And when an actor's beyond jealousy, he's pretty far gone.

"Almost always he's gentle and sweet, but once in a long while he loses his temper. He overworks her and himself both, but he won't let up on either her or himself. She said she got so tired with the work he made her do, that she used to cry and complain, but now she knows that it's all for her good, and so she stands it the best she can. She's run way down in flesh, though, with it all. Yet he won't let up. It seems to be a sort of mania with him that she's to become the greatest actress in America. And I guess she will, if she lives. Sometimes, after the show, he keeps her up until three or four o'clock in the morning going over scenes.

"Last April when I went out to visit her, I

saw him put her through. They were going over "Lookout Mountain." He was terribly nervous and strung up, you could see that, but he kept calm and gentle till they struck the opening of the fourth act. She told me afterwards, in apologizing for him, that she'd disappointed him in this act for a long time, that she'd been working and working, but couldn't get it his way. When he corrected her a few times I could see plainly enough that she was pretty near all in. Leamington was Captain Sheldon coming home from the war, limping and his arm in a sling, while she was Agnes who'd been his bride of a week, two years before. He walked eagerly toward the chair which stood for the old white gate.

"When she saw him, she rushed to him, and kissed him, but she didn't do it to suit him and he suddenly burst out in mixed prayers and curses, 'Lord, Lord, deliver me from such abysmal stupidity. O merciful Father, why, why, why did'st thou not endow her pretty empty head with brains?'

"Then he screamed at her, 'No, no, that's wrong; do you understand, dead WRONG. You're not a sweet girl graduate swinging

over a gate with your puppy love. You're a grown woman, meeting your soldier husband who's limping home to you, after you'd thought him dead.'

"Then she tried it another way, and he muttered scornfully, half aloud: 'She's not playing Delilah nor Dubarry nor Cleopatra nor Sapho, nor any other wanton. But she thinks she is. The part, to be sure, calls for a decent American married woman who's glad to see her soldier husband home. I have never been able to find anything to indicate that Agnes Sheldon was a half crazed sensualist. This young woman here,' he pointed at Sylvia, 'is the Columbus of that discovery. Well, we'll try again, I suppose.'

"Then," continued Blanche, "he turned to her in the sweetest, pleasantest way, just as if he hadn't meant her to overhear his soliloquy, and said, 'Now, Miss Castleman, try again, if—you—please.' He sort of bit off his words, 'That—last—was—not—exactly—right.'

"She began to cry, and I interfered, and told Leamington to quit, and that he'd break her down and kill her. He ordered me out of the room, but I told him to go to the devil

and finally I got Sylvia to bed. Yet he was at it again just the same the next night."

"What a brute," murmured Paul, indignant.

"Yes, a brute, but a great teacher, and he'll make her or kill her. He loves her."

"Funny kind of love."

"Real love. He's willing to take chances with her. He says that if he doesn't work her, she'll remain just another of the ocean of mediocrities, and she might as well be broken outright as that. He'd rather gamble with her, and see if he can't make a great artist of her—the only thing in his creed that's worth while."

"Play-acting is evidently more of a task than has been popularly supposed," observed Paul, sententiously.

"Play-acting," quoth Blanche, "is a bum expression. It's work, acting. But she's getting along. Leamington says now in a couple of years she'll be ready to go to Broadway. But he won't let her try it in New York till she is all polished off and finished. He wants her to hit the town straight between the eyes when she comes. And she'll do it. That's my guess."

"Pretty near bed-time," said Carl, yawning. "Breakfast at seven-thirty, you know."

For a very long time that night, Paul lay awake, passing his years in review.

He rose from his bed and, leaning his elbows on the sill, looked up at the late moon slight and low in her last quarter. Said he to himself, "I wonder if Carl will be down on me because of Sylvia. That Blanche woman, if she takes it into her head, can make him think it was pretty bad."

CHAPTER XIX

CARL UTTERS A PROPHECY

"Oh, let me hold her a minute, Mrs. Chester," he pleaded as they sat at breakfast the next morning. "She's going to be just exactly like Carl, don't you think? Look at those eyes and that forehead—his exactly. And her flesh—how firm it is. She'll be an athlete some day—probably captain of the Vassar basket-ball team." He gently poked the infant in the ribs, whereat she gurgled. "Eh, you little beauty?" he laughed.

The front door bell rang and Blanche left the room to answer it.

"It's a letter from Sylvia," she said, returning. "I will read it to you."

"Methodist Hospital, Kansas City,
July 16.

Dearest B———

I have had rather a siege of it—appendi-

citis. But I am out of danger now, and could, if necessary, work again in a month.

The people in the company were kind to me. They gave me two benefit matinees, and a good many of my friends in town went especially. So I am not in deep water financially. My debts are all to long suffering creditors who are willing to wait until I go to work again before pressing me.

This is my sixth week in the hospital. Some blood-poisoning complications threatened. But the time hasn't been wasted entirely. I have talked and talked and talked with the doctors and internes and nurses about diseases, especially consumption, fainting, "brain fever" (they say there isn't such a thing), heart disease and other favorites of the dramatist. Dr. Sylvester, the famous alienist and nerve specialist (you have heard of him, surely), comes in nearly every day now; and sometimes stays over an hour with me in the convalescent's sun parlor, where I sit in a wheeled chair. He has given me exhaustive and very clear and lucid lectures—(for that is what they are, just as if he were talking in a class-room)—about the various forms

and manifestations of insanity and moral decrepitude. The value of all this cannot be over-estimated, for I believe, judging from the present trend of playwriting that the great tragedies and dramas of the future will deal with destructions and injuries which fall upon the mind, rather than upon the body.

Dr. Sylvester is a splendid, clean, wholesome, sound, strong man, calm, incisively intelligent and well-poised. I think he likes me.

I have also improved my time with work on make-up. Like most actresses, I knew my own beauty make-up, but not much more. Why have we women left make-up to men? I suppose because we're too vain to take an interest in anything but the beauty make-up. And when we have a character part, most of us slap on a deep lake ground tone, line on a few heavy grey black wrinkles, and then neglect to blend them in. So we look ridiculous and completely destroy the illusion. I am going to keep on with my make-up until I can paint my face as faithfully to nature, when seen across the lights, as intelli-

gently and as skillfully as an artist paints his canvas.

I have left my really bad news until the last. Poor Leamington has disappeared again. It happened two days after I came here to the hospital. They didn't tell me for three weeks, so as not to upset me, and they have no trace of him at all. He has been so kind, so unselfish, so loyal, so painstaking with me. You know that he wants me to marry him. I said no, very definitely the day before I was brought here. I suppose I was sick at the time and didn't know it—which may have accounted for my harshness.

If I believed that I could keep him straight by marrying him, I would do it. He is so considerate, and truly a consummate artist. The company is falling to pieces very rapidly with both of us gone. I think they will darken the house soon now, though the management had expected to run us here all summer—we were doing so well. It's too bad, isn't it?

Of course I probably shan't be able to get a position before the season opens—but the rest will do me good, and I shall have time for much needed reading.

I should like to know where poor Leamington is. I think I could brace him up again. It is over two years since his last lapse.

He said that next season we should sign up with a number two company playing one of last season's New York's successes with a suitable part for me in it, and go on the road. He said that repertoire work has now done about all it can do for me for the present; that I have learned how to roughhew pretty well, and that now I must learn to refine, to acquire the details and subtleties of acting. So whether I can find him or not, that is what I am going to try for the coming season. Of course I can hardly hope for a lead (though I could play the leads better than three-fourths of your metropolitan doll-ingenues who are starred now-a-days), but I do want a part I can think about and work out, and re-create. I won't take a self-acting, pretty girl part. I shan't go into New York until I am ready. He said that would be two years more at least —perhaps three.

But some day I will go into New York—and take it. Some day my name will be in electric lights on Broadway; and that day

my career will have its beginning. Until then, all is preparation, school days.

I believe that all this is coming to pass as firmly and as surely and as confidently as I believe in the goodness of my mother. If I didn't know that great art was some day to be mine, I wouldn't care to go on living one single day longer.

Good-bye, dear Blanchette. Love to the kiddy. Ever yours, SYLVIA."

When the reading was finished, Carl looked at Paul a long while without speaking, then he said, "She is a fine woman; she is a very fine woman."

"It is a hard life, a very hard life," Paul answered.

"There are few winners in it," said Blanche, rising from the table, "but she is one of them."

Carl fell again into silence. Finally, "I feel like a fat, asthmatic, pet poodle, when I hear of such a beautiful, lithe, wild thing of the forests as she."

"There you go again," laughed Paul. "The beautiful, lithe, wild things are shot and trapped and hunted; they kill and

tear and destroy each other. I know, for I was a wild thing myself once. The forests are green and pleasant in the spring, but they are iron-cruel in winter."

"And it was you that sent her to those iron-winters. If you had done the square thing," said Carl with a sneer not wholly covered, "you would have saved her from"—

"Saved her from the stage," Paul interrupted. "Come, now, would that have been good for me, or for her, or for the stage?"

Carl looked him square in the eye. "No," said he deliberately, "it would not have been good for the stage or for her—that is true. It might have been a damned good thing for you, though."

Paul laughed scornfully, recklessly. The turbulent storm of emotions which the memories of Sylvia had raised in him, and whose expression he would deny, now in perverted shape urged him on to quarrel with the kindly little chap, to whom in accordance with the customs and edicts of New York's fashion's feudalism he owed allegiance.

"Yes, Carl, yes," he exclaimed, "It's all very well to talk so. You have love in simplicity here, but it's play simplicity—like

artificial rusticity of Antoinette's court before the revolution. They played at dairying, and you play at love in a cottage."

"Play—this is my real life. The other with its pageantry and riot is the make-believe to me. If I had to give up this or the other, I would give up the other—without a flicker of hesitation."

Paul turned on him suddenly, a trace of a sneer curling his lips. "You people who were bred and born and reared in parks and palaces," said he, "may find a charm in the picturesque plainness of the cottages you can see without, when you look through the palings, but you don't go outside to live just the same. You may ride through your gates for a hunting expedition, but you come back when you're dirty and tired and want a bath, fresh linen and a good dinner."

"Whatever you may think, Paul Potter," answered Carl in a voice low and passionate, "this is the only place on earth that counts with me; the only spot where happiness ever finds me; this is my home, where the women I love lives. Do you dream for an instant that I'd let position and money and society and all its follies come before this? If so, you

misjudge me wholly. Don't judge me by yourself."

To which Paul answered, "I only hope you'll never have the test made. You can never tell what you'll do in a pinch until the pinch comes."

Paul, realizing that suspicion always visited the powerful with most damnable facility, was greatly disturbed by the little quarrel. Let Carl once begin to argue that a man who, for her lack of money, had abandoned a woman, would probably, for love of money profess friendship to another man; and many of Paul's most radiant new plans would find themselves dangerously menaced.

He courted Carl for ten days before the last evidence of his disapproval was wholly erased. Then patience, tact, forbearance to snubs were rewarded. The wooer was restored to favor. And he learned his lesson well. No more would he allow himself the indulgence of the quick retort at the expense of the young millionaire who had been his roommate—for now they were in New York, not in New Haven.

CHAPTER XX

THE USES OF A LADY

Mrs. Evers was being dressed for luncheon. It was half past eleven in the morning; and luncheon was not until one thirty, but there was a great deal of dressing to be done. She sat in Valenciennes lace petticoat and short white chiffon dressing jacket, before a wide triple-mirrored table whereon were scattered a profusion of toilet articles.

There were brushes, combs, hand-glasses, jars for rouge, cold-cream, pomade, bottles of hair brilliance, hair restorer, hair vivifier, hair tonic, nail scissors, nail files, nail cleaners, nail polishers, powder-puffs, face pincers, electric needles, and many boxes for false hair. All were backed, finished or topped in carven yellow gold, for the pride of Mrs. Evers.

As she sat, studying her profile in the

triple mirror a bearded Frenchman wove her chestnut hair into strange, artificial ripples. "Gaston," she said impatiently, "sometimes I think you are ruining my hair. It is beginning to look dead. You do much better for my sister."

"Ah, but madame know zat Madame Wildmerding do not have her hair wave so tight, and wiz not sooch a 'ot iron."

"Nonsense. If you had a good tonic, you can make it as glossy as ever. I must have my hair waved tightly. I couldn't stand it floppy and bulgy. That's not my type."

"I will do ze best I can, madame."

"Besides you have been making my forehead altogether too low. I know I said to make it low, but you've left practically no forehead at all, and my nose becomes too prominent. Leave my forehead low, but don't make it vanish. Any gray hairs this morning?"

"No, madame."

"Well, there were some last week. Glass noticed them after the Elsom's ball. Be careful that it doesn't happen again."

"Yes, madame."

A young woman was polishing Mrs. Evers'

finger nails while Gaston was dressing her hair.

"Miss Furness, don't you think it would look smarter to have them a little longer and more pointed?" anxiously queried the lady of fashion. "I think you've been keeping them too blunt.

"Very well, ma'am," answered the manicure sulkily.

A tall, thin chested working girl came into the room, carrying a large cylindrical cardboard box labelled "Madame Delorme." Presently Mrs. Evers waved her free hand to the girl, motioning to open the box.

"What do you mean," exclaimed the lady, her hard disappointment breaking forth as the little lace and feather edifice was held before her, "what do you mean by bringing me such a hideosity? How dare Madame Delorme send me plumes made up of three, no, four, little feathers put together? She knows I will stand no such cheap-John tricks. Take that back at once and tell her I shall not pay her one penny until she does better."

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl, and retired.

"Glass," the lady now addressed her maid. "Call Mr. Potter on the telephone."

Presently Glass announced, "Mr. Potter is on the wire, madame."

Mrs. Evers took the receiver with her left hand, her right being extended to the manicure, while Glass held the transmitter close to her lips. "Hello, Mr. Potter? This is M——"....."And I'm glad to hear you, too."....."Oh, he went downtown long ago. I'm just getting up. I hope I didn't disturb you, calling you at your office, but it's really very important."....."How polite you are getting to be."....."Well, I thought you'd come up for dinner tonight at a quarter before seven. Die Valkyrie begins at half past seven, and I could drive you over in the brougham. Wouldn't that be nice?" ....."Nobody, just ourselves."....."No, he won't be here, just we two. Then afterwards we all come back for supper here." ....."Well, then, that's settled. Quarter to seven. I'm so glad. Good-bye."

"Glass, ask Mrs. Bishop to step up."

The housekeeper, a pleasant looking middle-aged, stout English matron entered. "Oh good morning, Mrs. Bishop," said Muriel pleasantly. "Dinner for two in the breakfast room at quarter to seven; we're going to the

opera; and then we'll have supper at midnight for eighteen or twenty. You'd better count on twenty-four. Make it elastic, I mean."

"Yes, madam; have you any wishes about the supper?"

"Well, let's see. Fresh caviare and watercress salad. Whatever else you think of. The birds were dry and overcooked Saturday. Be sure to speak to the chef about that for tonight. I won't be here for lunch. And Mrs. Bishop, the bills are getting frightful. You must cut them down. You can't? Well, try anyway. Flowers? Oh, violets, and orchids. But not too many orchids. We simply must economize. Have some palms put in the corner of the hall. I've arranged for the harpist woman to come. No, don't come to me with such troubles. I want you to take the burden of those details off my shoulders. The doctor says I must show more consideration for my nerves, or I'll have nervous prostration. Discharge him and get another, if you want, but don't bother me about it."

The manicure, the hairdresser and Mrs. Bishop departed. Mrs. Evers gazed search-

ingly at herself in the dressing table mirror, then gently pressed the tips of her fingers to the corners of her eyes as if in exorcism of the threatening and relentless wrinklets which she regarded each day anew with fresh and unhappy alarm. She sighed, and brushed the white-powder puff lightly over her face. She dipped a chamois rag into the rouge pot, rubbed her cheeks with it, paused and looked again into the glass.

"Is that noticeable now, Glass?" she inquired anxiously.

The maid regarded her carefully, took a fresh bit of chamois and rubbed her mistress' cheeks. "That is better, madam."

"But I look ghastly, now, Glass."

"No, madam."

"Oh, very well, but I tell you I do," insisted the lady, who however yielded the point, and taking up the pink-powder puff brushed it carefully over her face. She took a charcoal pencil and touched her eyebrows, thrice drew a stick of red pomade over her lips and moistened the lobes of her ears with the stopper of the eau de violette bottle.

Glass carefully held open a skirt of claret-red velvet, slipped it over Mrs. Ever's head,

then fastened it very, very tightly in the back.

Mrs. Evers surveyed herself carefully in the cheval glass, turning about to see from every angle how the dress hung, smoothing it down with the palms of her hands. She moved again to her dressing table and sat a minute studying her mirrored reflection. She snapped a single row of very large pearls about her neck. Then she raised her hands above her head. Into them Glass placed a large brown velvet hat with brown feather. Mrs. Evers spent a quarter of an hour adjusting hat and hair together and another ten minutes fitting a dotted veil over the merger. Still gazing into the mirror she held out her hands to her maid who drew upon them a pair of new white kid gloves.

The lady arose, and waited while the servant adjusted about her neck eight trailing feet of Russian sable, and placed in her passive hands a muff of the same costly fur.

Then she again walked to the cheval glass, and turning slowly before it, said with satisfaction: "Well, I think I shall do. I'm

afraid I'm late, though. Is the brougham out? I'll be home before four. Have my lavender tea-gown ready."

"Yes, madam," answered Glass.

CHAPTER XXI

PAGEANTRY RESPLENDENT

"We must smoke here," said Muriel as the liqueurs were brought by the butler and the footman removed the last debris of the feast for two from the table. "The smell always stays in my hair, if I smoke in the carriage." They lit cigarettes. Hers was fitted in an amber holder that her fingers might be protected from stain. "We shall have to hurry. It's half after now," she remarked.

They laid their half finished cigarettes in their coffee saucers and went downstairs. The door of the electric brougham was slammed behind them by the hall footman and the smoothly running vehicle slid noiselessly down the asphalt to the Metropolitan Opera House.

"You are wonderful tonight," said Paul. "The most beautiful woman in the world."

She smiled happily and turned toward him. As they flashed by the street lamps, his sharply-cut, strong profile stood out in bold relief; and even in the dominating light of the arcs his tan, gained by a summer of polo and an autumn of drag-hunting, contrasted virilely with the whiteness of his broad shirt bosom. "Pauline," she said, "I wonder you are not spoiled by women. You are so good-looking. But you won't let them spoil you, will you?"

Presently she said, "Listen to my plan, dear. After supper tonight, wait until the last people are leaving, go out with them, and then come back after you see them well started for home. I want to —— talk to you a little tonight; and Dick" (Dick was her husband) "telephoned this afternoon that he had been called away to Philadelphia on business and would not be home."

"Philadelphia?" smiled Paul.

"Yes, Phil-a-del-phia. Truly he must think I am terribly simple. But then I don't care one little bit. If anything, I am glad because it eases my conscience—about you. He was the first to begin, by many years."

The opera that night was a success. The

fashionable women of New York displayed hundreds of yards of bare neck and millions of dollars worth of jewels to the gaze of whomsoever paid to see. When the lights were up between the acts they sat indolently in the front seats of the boxes of the diamond circle, talking negligently over their white shoulders to the men from the other boxes who had come in to visit them.

The unfashionable women, gathered from all parts of the country, studied the box-holders, marveling at their calm under the fire of the levelled opera glasses and excitedly whispering to their husbands, "Oh, John (or Henry or Richard), that must be her in the middle of the third box on the right. See, over there."

John (or Henry or Richard) would murmur indulgently, "Well, well, what of it?" then gaze as intently as his good wife at the woman whose husband was worth twenty-five million dollars. "Let me have the glasses, a minute, Mary," he would say, "You can't keep them all night."

The artists upon the stage were, as had been advertised, in receipt of the highest salaries ever paid to singers, which doubt-

less contributed to the wild applause which burst out at each proper pause during the performance.

* * * * * * *

Two dozen fashionables came to Muriel's supper party after the opera. The more emotional among them had been swept from their moorings by Wagner's terrific orchestration and by the organ tones of Santuzzo's torrential voice, out upon unknown oceans.

But now they were returning to the narrow bays and shallow charted waters of common life. They sighed for the vanishing brief vision of immensity, then accepted matter-of-factness as finality, and fell upon the familiar champagne.

There was talk of the price of stocks; of Santuzzo's voice and more of his immoralities; of the latest divorce and the next one. When the table was cleared, a few of the women drifted into a corner to exchange stray anecdotes of London society; and a few of the men lingered together to discuss more intimately than they had cared to in the presence of the whole party, the rumor that the elder Wildmerding and Harvey Ellis had united to control Fremont Western railroad.

Potter went out with the last guests. He bade them good-night at the curbstone, and stepped into a waiting cab. Five minutes later he tapped twice on the Evers front door, which was quickly opened by Muriel.

"Come upstairs to the morning room, Pauline, and we can have a chat. But don't make a noise."

She drew up two chairs side by side in the little red room, before the wood fire. "Murietta will make him comfy in a minute," she said, lighting a cigarette for him, and then one for herself. "Will he have a bink —just a little one—and she will have one, too." She mixed two short Scotch highballs, handed him one and took the vacant seat before the fire, placing her feet beside his on the brass fender.

"Do you know, boy," she said, "you must have some really big qualities? There are not many who could do what you have done. To come here penniless from a little western town and make your way in seven years into the very center of the best life in New York is rather good work. And truly, I don't mean to flatter you, but you do things very well. It would be hardly possi-

ble to distinguish you from a born New Yorker of the upper classes." She laid her long white hand upon his shoulder.

He smiled. He was pleased at what she had said. "It would be hardly possible," he repeated. "What makes it possible at all?"

"I am afraid you will mind if I tell you?"

"Mind from you? Of course not. I should mind if you didn't tell me. And you will, if you are my friend."

"Your friend—ah, Paul, I think you know that. If I were you, then—and this is an odd thing to say, something one could say to very few—I shouldn't dress quite so well. You're too perfect about your clothes. It gives an impression of perhaps a little lack of ease. Go to an older man's tailor, or else insist on yours dressing you six months slower than he does. You're always at the very forefront of the fashions. You don't mind my saying that, dear?"

"Mind—of course not. What else is wrong? Let's hear."

"We-ell, I can't think just now. Perhaps I'd drop my voice just the least weeniest little bit in talking. Now I suppose you hate me, for being so nasty, but I don't hate you,

Paul. I love you. Do you know you're the best looking man I ever knew? I oughtn't to tell you such things. I'll spoil you. Perhaps it's too late not to, now, though," she sighed. "Oh-hè, I'm afraid I have spoiled you already. I have made it all too plain to you, dearest. All too plain." She put her arm about his neck and drew his cheek to hers. So sitting, wordless, they watched the embers.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BETROTHAL

When, eleven years before, Dick Evers married tall, slender, big-eyed Muriel Devereux, he loved her. But life was so easy for them that they drifted apart. A world existed to serve each of them, and so there was little reason for them to serve each other. They were not helpmeets. She did not aid him in his Wall Street croupier operations; he did not aid her to choose dresses, diamonds or dinner guests. They had one child, and hired trained nurses, governesses, tutors and boarding schools to rear him. They had no common worries, no common sorrows, no common troubles. So when passion wore out for Dick, there was nothing left, not even companionship. They seldom saw each other except in the presence of other fashionable folk. He turned to

other women and she to other men, and each consented to the arrangement.

Under his uncomplaining eyes, she had encouraged serious attentions from a score of admirers. None of her flirtations had seemed to ruffle him until her present affair with Paul. Now for the first time that jealousy which, to have been effectual, should have showed itself long before, began to manifest itself. Dick even went so far as to complain directly to his wife about Potter. She looked at him in amazement and laughed. But secretly she was flattered. "Why, Richard," she said, "I thought you were far beyond caring what I did. You haven't been evincing any particular interest in my movements, or in my friends, for several years past."

"Oh, it isn't what you do that I care so much about, as it is him. I can't stand that man Potter. He is a western bounder and a climber, and I don't want the woman who bears my name to be seen so much with him. If you must amuse yourself, why don't you get a decent chap, one of your own class to play with? He is distinctly *infra dig.*"

She was chilled and answered indifferently,

"My dear Richard, you have chosen friends who would, if they were admitted, make a far less presentable appearance in society than Mr. Potter. But I am not aware that I have ever complained. I am quite capable of choosing my own friends and of behaving myself always in a perfectly discreet and decorous fashion." She turned her listless eyes back to a salacity by Catulle Mendes, in the perusal of which he had interrupted her. He left the room, scowling.

His irritation increased as time went on and her latest flirtation showed no signs of abating. Finally he determined if possible to trap her in a compromising position. That done, he would hold the whip hand.

He fell back on the plan of pretending to leave town, and of suddenly appearing before an unexpecting wife. The deception was successful, not because Muriel supposed he had gone to Philadelphia, but because she believed he was spending the night in the apartment of his mistress in New York.

But with his valet for scout, Dick made his way unobserved by the other servants, to his bedroom, while his wife was at the opera. He had remained there quietly behind

locked doors during the noisy supper party, waiting until the last guests were gone.

Then he stood by his darkened front window and looked down. Soon his patience was rewarded, for he saw the tall, high-hatted figure of a man, after a quick look up and down the street, hurry up the front steps and disappear into the blackness of the vestibule below.

Evers bided his time. Then very quietly he began to reconnoitre. A glance into his wife's bedroom showed him its emptiness. "Blank covert," he muttered, "but we'll find yet."

A thin line of light visible under the door of the morning room warned him to extreme caution. He tiptoed down the hall and placed his ear to the keyhole. Two voices, one a woman's, the other a man's were audible, but the words were indistingushable. Finally the voices ceased altogether. He paused a minute, then very softly, very quietly, he turned the knob. Slowly and quite noiselessly he pushed open the door.

Across the room he saw his wife and the other man, their backs to him, sitting closely side by side and cheek to cheek, looking

silently into the fire. Her bare white arm was about the other man's neck. Full thirty seconds Dick stood there staring.

Poisonous hatred for both of them scorched his soul. He took a step toward the table by the door where stood the whisky, ice, siphon water, Apollinaris. Turning his back to the fireplace where the two sat, he cautiously dribbled a little whiskey into a tumbler, then suddenly shot it full of the charged and sizzling siphon water.

The sudden gushing noise shocked the two dreamers wide awake. The woman quickly turned her head to see her husband, his back to her, mixing a drink. In a flash she felt that he had not seen, and most casually she spoke to him. "Why, hello, Dick. I thought you were in Philadelphia. Mr. Potter has just brought me back my diamond star which I dropped at the opera tonight. Wasn't it lucky he found it?"

"Which star?" said Evers. "How-do, Potter."

"This one," said Muriel, pointing to a bit of jewelry which glittered in her green bodice. "The one you gave me on our tenth anniversary. I should have been sorry to

lose it. Queer as it may seem to you, old bear, I really have a little sentiment about it.''

Paul had been living very rapidly during the last few seconds. Emotions of dominating force and violence surged through him. Why, why, why had he not heeded his early training and vouchsafed implicit obedience to the laws of God and man? Why had Muriel Evers let him in for such a thing? She was a woman of the world, and ought at least to know the movements of her own husband. If he ever got out of this, he would out of very gratitude behave himself forevermore.

Under the woman's skillful creation, the story of the lost diamond star grew more and more plausible. She had first missed it at supper, and Paul had kindly volunteered to go at once in search of it. It was not in the brougham. Paul then had gone back to the opera house, and had given ten dollars to the watchman to gain admittance. Only after removing the linen cover from the chair in which Muriel had been sitting during Die Valkyrie—it was a wonder, wasn't it, that one of the caretakers had not found and

kept it?—had he discovered the missing jewel tightly wedged between the cushions. So he had at once returned with it to the house.

Through all her story Paul had kept silence, lest his interruption should confuse the free flow of her imagination. And as Dick seemed readily enough to accept the explanation a sense of beatific relief washed up about Paul's soul. She was a wonderful woman, and wonderfully had she met this crisis for him.

When her tale was all told, Muriel said, "And so I think we both owe Mr. Potter a great deal of thanks for what he has done for us tonight, don't you, Dick?"

The suave note dropped suddenly out of Dick's voice. Instead, a deathly, scoriant sneer entered in. "Yes," said he, "we—I—owe him a great deal for what he has done for me tonight."

The vocal change was enough. Words were not necessary. Comfort surged away from Paul's soul, leaving behind it the gray and hideous slime-flats of despair. The woman went paler, but spoke serenely, with raised eyebrows.

"Ah, you saw?"

"Yes, I saw. I stood here for five minutes before you heard me. Yes, I saw."

"Then why did you lead me on to lie to you?" she asked querulously, like a complaining child. "You have always done that, always led me on to lie, whenever you could. What did you do it for?"

"I wasn't trying to make you lie. I knew *you* could do it. I merely wanted to see what kind of a chap this is you've mixed yourself up with. He doesn't seem to amount to much. He left the whole burden for you to carry."

Potter took a threatening step toward Evers. But that gentleman spoke most coolly. "Calm yourself, my young friend, or I'll touch this pretty little button in the wall and have you thrown out in the street by the servants. My valet is waiting up, just in case I should ring. You see I came prepared. And it would leave my poor wife in a mess, if my servants should throw you out of my house at three o'clock in the morning. Wouldn't it, Potter?"

"Evidently there is only one thing to do," said Muriel meditatively, "and that is for us to get a divorce, Dick, as soon and as quietly as possible."

"Evidently. Of course your idea is to marry Potter. Well, do it. That is about all the harm I can wish you. That will square me with you."

"And now, Potter, let me know your plans," continued Dick in his machete voice. "Will you marry Mrs. Evers after the divorce?"

"Assuredly, if she will accept me," Paul answered quickly.

"Ah, then, I'll proceed to get square with you. You are not by any manner of means her first lover. Oh, I came prepared. Here are three letters that were written to my wife within five years by three different men. She never knew until this moment that I had them. I saved them. Read these letters, one from a boy, one from a man, one from a grandfather, and put any other but one construction on them if you can." Dick held out three letters to Paul, who advanced to receive them.

With terror in her eyes, Muriel moaned, "Oh Paul, don't, don't; it will kill me if you do."

But Paul, his eyes glittering, his nostrils wide, his body atremble, as if he awaited the

referee's whistle for the kickoff in the Harvard game, held out his hands toward the other man for the letters. Evers smiled in happiness. He was wrecking the future life of the other two, even before it had begun. He was getting square.

The athlete's hand suddenly shot to the other's wrist. A sudden twist, and Paul forced his enemy, gulping with pain, to walk, bent over, toward the fire place. "Put those letters in," said the captor. "Put them in, or—" a torturing twist of the wrist completed the sentence. The old love-letters fell upon the flames.

"Now," said Paul, "I am between you and the pretty little bell that your valet is waiting for and I'll thank you to keep a civil tongue in your head from now on, both to her and to me. If you don't—I'll man-handle you. I guess you know I can do it."

Evers, middle aged and fat, gasped furiously. "Yes, I know you can do it. And you know just about what was in those letters that are burning now in the grate. Long after the twist you've given my wrist stops hurting, the twist I've given your soul with the sight of those three letters, written by

three different men in the space of five short years, will torture you. You will never be sure of her. You will start three on your honeymoon, you, she and Suspicion—"

"Shut up," interrupted Paul savagely, giving another wrench to Evers' wrist.

"Take your hands off me, or, by God, there'll be no quiet and quick divorce as Muriel has so glibly assumed. I'll name you, if it's the last thing on earth I do."

Paul looked for direction to the woman, who still sat limp in the chair in which she had been discovered. She nodded to him, and he released Evers.

"Now," she said quietly, "it is time for you two men to stop acting like children. There will be a quiet and quick divorce, without the least fuss or scandal."

"Ho, really? What makes you think so?" exclaimed Dick.

"Keep your temper, and don't shout," she said sweetly. "There will be decency in this matter because I can compel it. In a calmer moment, Richard, you will see that it would do you no good to throw mud at me, knowing that in consequence you would quickly be plastered all over with it your-

"PUT THOSE LETTERS IN, PUT THEM IN, OR—"

self. If you act in a nasty way, I shall bring in Helen Alaire."

"Helen Alaire," Dick laughed. "Why that's absurd."

"Not half so absurd as you'd have me think. I know all about that house party the Alaires gave in the Adirondacks winter before last."

"Rot," growled Dick.

"No, not rot, Dick Evers, and you know it. Furthermore, you know that Jim Ellis means to marry her as soon as she gets her divorce, and that if such things as I can prove, prove mind you, come out, it will finish you with Jim and the entire Ellis family. I don't fancy you will let that connection go, for the sake of a little personal revenge on a woman you have long ceased to care for. *N'est ce pas?*"

Evers lit a cigarette and paced slowly up and down the room, rubbing his injured wrist, while Paul kept carefully near the bell. Finally the husband agreed, "All right—South Dakota for you, and no gossip. But I'll give you, Muriel, just one more bit of information. You thought this fellow had an income of fifty or sixty thousand; well, he

hasn't. He hasn't over thirty-five at the outside. You'll find that rather a comedown. You and he have made your bed. Now lie on it."

The interview was at an end. Paul mumbled that it seemed to be time for him to go. He opened the door. The woman hurried toward him and shook hands with him, whispering, "Good-night, dear. Call me up at eleven in the morning." She turned a switch in the wall which lighted his way down to the front door, and stood at the head of the stairs, watching him descend. When the door slammed behind him, she went to her bedroom and undressed, leaving her husband to pace up and down in the morning room, smoking a cigarette and rubbing his sprained wrist.

CHAPTER XXIII

THAT SKEYNE TRICK

Paul and Muriel were married fifteen months later and went abroad for the summer. "You see," said she, "with our limited income, we can't afford Newport and New York both. So we can go cheaply this summer, and live decently next winter, in town." (In the divorce settlement, the Evers town house had fallen to her share.)

They returned in November, and by January she was discontented. "This is the second time this week we have dined alone together," she exclaimed one evening as they sat in the morning room over their coffee and cigarettes.

"Is it then such a hardship to dine alone with me?" he asked.

"Not that of course, you old bear, but it shows we are dropping out of things a little;

I hate the hypocrisy of people who veer off as soon as they see you in misfortune."

"Misfortune! What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, do be sensible, Paul. They know we haven't very much and so they don't consider me, as I used to be considered, as I *ought* to be considered." She spoke vehemently.

"Why, it seems to me that people have not dropped us. We've been to every house in town, except those of the immediate Evers' family—and the Blite's."

"Yes, the Blite's. I can't understand that. Editha Blite always used to pretend to be a friend of mine. I can remember when she was glad to be seen with me. I think it's disgusting the way she is acting now. Especially as she is so saccharine whenever I see her anywhere."

"Then," consoled the man, "if they are the only places we don't go, I can't see why you have such a hard-luck story. Most everybody has a few places they are not invited to."

"Oh," exclaimed Muriel impatiently, "you don't understand at all Of course we are

asked to places. I'm not a blackamoor, and I should expect to be asked. But the whole tone, the whole color of things is terribly different. You see, there are half a dozen women who really are the leaders in New York, who decide everything—who is to be admitted, who is to be dropped, in fact everything. Until this winter, I was an intimate friend of those women. They used to consult me, and have me to small luncheons and ask me to find out things for them. I was behind the scenes. Now I am not at the heart of affairs, as I used to be. Things suddenly happen that I never have any inkling of, until everybody else knows it. And I can assure you, mon ami, that that is not pleasant."

"You're blue," said Paul kindly, putting his hand upon her shoulder. "Come, dear, cheer up."

She quickly shrugged her shoulders, shaking his hand off. "And Anita has behaved very badly for a sister, I must say. She could do a great deal more for me than she does. She's been quarrelsome ever since I told her I was going to marry you."

"Why?" said he shortly.

"You might imagine. She said as long as the divorce had been quietly accomplished without talk, there was no need of marrying; and that you weren't a member of a strong New York family, which is certainly true; and that you wouldn't have enough money for us to keep up my old position. And when I wasn't persuaded, she said she would wash her hands of me and we didn't speak for a long time."

She paused, then went on, "Still, dear, don't think I mean to reproach you, for I don't."

"Reproach me," he burst out angrily. "I should say not. Why in the devil should you reproach me? Haven't I been working hard and giving you every cent I make? I sold my string of ponies in order to save the money, and you've already blown in what would have given me a season's polo on one dance."

"We must keep up our position, Paul. You'd be the first one to complain if I didn't see to that."

"Yes, and you say that you aren't keeping it up, even so," he retorted.

"I can't on the money we have. You'll

have to make more if you want Mr. and Mrs. Paul Potter to have as strong a position as belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Evers. Dick had an income of over two hundred thousand. You have—just how much?" she drawled.

"Perhaps fifty thousand this year—if this good market continues. But we can't spend our summers abroad if you expect me to accomplish anything. I can't make money at the end of a cable wire. It's only the big fellows can do that."

"Fifty thousand dollars—and I have of my own only enough to dress on. What does that amount to nowadays?"

"Oh," said Paul sarcastically, "we ought with good management to keep the wolf from the door."

"I have always aspired to something a little better than keeping the wolf from the door. Think of Anita. She will have two or three millions a year some day; and Katherine Ellis will have three or four. Why they spend more every year on jewels alone than we get altogether."

"I'm sorry; can't help it," said Paul light-

ing a cigar and turning to the financial pages of his evening paper.

But the woman was not to be swerved. "Paul, dear, can't you possibly make more than fifty thousand this year? Can't you make a hundred? We need it so terribly. There are so many things we simply have to have. We ought to have at least one more motor, another chauffeur and a helper."

"What rot, Muriel," he ejaculated, "That would take up about thirty thousand the first year. What do you want of another machine? I think you might get along with the one we have. It's a good one, this year's model."

"Oh, really," said Muriel, "a well equipped garage is necessary. It would be almost wiser to affect eccentricity and have no motor at all, than only one."

"Yes," responded Paul, grimly, "and I suppose you'd like me to get you a nice yacht. Only a quarter of a million a year. And a villa in Newport—half a million, and a couple of country places and a few shooting boxes. Why, damn it, you must be going clean out of your mind to talk as you do."

"Of course, dear, I know we can't have

such things now. But I have ambition, I should certainly look forward to having what other people have some day. You are clever. Why shouldn't you do as well in business as other men? I shouldn't think you would care to acknowledge, even to yourself, that you can't."

"But what's the end of it all? What's the use?" Paul threw his cigar viciously into the grate and began to pace up and down. "This insatiate cry of yours for more, more, can never be gratified. The men who've grown really rich, saved when they were young. They didn't live beyond their income from their very wedding day, as we've been doing. And there seems no hope, no prospect of a let-up. My business has been growing. I've been doing better every year. I've made stronger connections. But it seems that no matter how well I do, you will always keep a little ahead of me, always spend a little more than we have. If the income doubles next year, the outgo will double. The whole thing is foolish, ridiculous. Why pretend that we have more than we have and try to live like people who have ten times as much?"

His voice shot up an octave. "Only let me

catch up," he pleaded, "let me get even, or some day, sure, there'll be an awful smash. I am done up now. I feel as if I ought to go to a rest cure and give my nerves a chance to fatten up again. They're all frazzled out, and worn to loose ends."

"You must take care of yourself, Paul, dear," she laid her hand on his shoulder caressingly. "We can't afford to have you break down. Go to bed early and get plenty of sleep and exercise. I should never forgive myself if anything happened to you."

"Plenty of sleep and exercise," he broke in. "Ha, that's a good one. What chance do I get for sleep when it's staying up till all hours and guzzling at fool musicales and dances and dinners and Punch and Judy shows every night and getting up early every morning and going down to Wall Street and hustling and fighting and scheming in order to scratch together another wad for you to burn up? You get your sleep, all right. You stay in bed till noon. But where does my chance for sleep come in?"

"But, dear, we must keep up our position —especially this year, when people are hesitating about us. This year is the critical

one. We've simply got to keep a stiff upper lip. If they saw us weakening, they'd be on our backs like a—"

"Like the pack of wolves they are," interrupted he. "Well, let 'em."

"No, I have too much pride for that. I cannot bear, whatever happens, to relinquish the position I have always held in New York, and slip backward."

"The only position you ever had was that of a spender—and it's a cinch you can't be as big a spender when you're married to a fifty thousand dollar a year man as when you were married to a two hundred thousand dollar a year man." Paul's lip trembled. He seemed on the verge of hysteria. "I can't help not having more, but I haven't. You've got to cut your coat according to your cloth. Honestly," his voice broke, "you make me so damned nervous sometimes, Muriel, with your eternal talk about position. Position—oh, to hell with position."

"Don't swear, Paul. Try to remember that you have become a gentleman and that you are married to a lady," she purred.

"Yes, a lady who carried on three separate sets of love correspondence with three dif-

ferent men, one a boy and one a grandfather, within five years." He had lost control of himself. It was the first quarrel of their married life, and its violence atoned for its delay.

She put her arms around his neck and attempted to kiss him, but he drew away. "Dearest," she said, "don't let us quarrel. Please don't. We must be everything to each other after what we have gone through for each other."

"I'm going to the club," said Paul loosening her arms. "I have my key. Don't wait up for me."

When she heard the street door shut behind him, she covered her face with her hands and wept. "Everything is against me," she moaned, "everything crumbles to pieces under my touch. I only want to be happy, happy. I want so much to be happy; and I cannot."

The tears of self pity trickled from her eyes through her fingers, wetting the rubies and diamonds of her rings, and falling drop by drop on the pale amber colored satin of her gown.

Lassie Ellis was sprawling his bulk in a

red leather arm chair in the club, slowly turning the leaves of an English weekly devoted to music halls and the turf, when Paul entered.

He let the paper slip between his knees to the floor, and half straightened himself in his easy chair. "Hello, son," he said.

"Hello, what's doing?"

"Nothing much. Have a drink?"

Paul nodded. They went into the cafe and Lassie's heavy thumb pushed down the electric button. When their orders had been taken he said, "Want to play some bridge tonight?"

"Yes, I'm bored as can be. Let's go up now and cut into a game."

"I don't mean here, but at the flat. I'll telephone Bessie to get someone to make up four."

"Boy," said he to the middle-aged man in brass buttons, who was standing apart at a respectful distance awaiting the further pleasure of the two gentlemen, "Get me double sixteen Grand Central on the wire."

"Yes, sir."

"And boy," added Paul, "bring two more."

"Yes, sir."

When Lassie returned from the telephone booth, he was smiling. "It's all right," said he, "Bessie has a nice little girl spending the evening with her, so we might as well be going now." He drained his glass in two gulps without troubling to sit down, then called, "Cab, boy," and made for the cloak room, Paul following.

As the two big men stood in the hall waiting for their overcoats, it could be seen that something of the grace of body of their rowing days had departed from them. Ellis, although he was an even six feet, did not seem to be tall because of the great width of his shoulders, his waist, his hips and the thickness of his arms and neck and legs. His face was round and stolid, unmarked by lines of thought and care.

Paul's face was sharp and thin and sallow, but the outlines of a figure which in his youth had been nearly perfect in its clean symmetry, were now a trifle blurred by a pad of soft overlying fat flesh.

The son of Harvey Ellis covered his black broadcloth with a mighty garment of Russian sable, made of the skins of many little Sibe-

rian animals, and costing twenty times as much as the long, mink-lined overcoat which Paul sighing, donned. The sigh was not because the mink coat was less warm or less beautiful (he was not an esthete), but because, being so very much less expensive, it marked the inferiority of his own status to the status of his friend.

"I don't know about your arrangement," began Paul interrogatively when the hansom had turned north on Fifth avenue.

"Oh—Bessie Devens is a girl I've known for a couple of months. She's a good fellow, and always drives away the blues."

"She's your girl, you mean."

"Yes, you see," explained Lassie, "she is so cheerful—such a damned good fellow. Men are natural polygamists, anyhow, I guess; and it isn't virtue so much as want of the price which keeps most of the straight ones straight."

"I'm not sure you're not right," acquiesced Paul.

Miss Bessie Devens was a prepossessing young woman, with the whitest teeth in the world. She smiled a great deal.

She presented Miss Skeyne, a pert, little,

laughing, chattering, red-headed girl to Paul; and the four sat down to bridge.

A tall, silent, lantern jawed Englishman placed a decanter of Scotch whiskey, cracked ice, soda-water bottles, and a silver box of cigarettes on a little table convenient to the reach of the two men. The Misses Skeyne and Devens played remarkably good bridge; and it was not until two o'clock that the last rubber was finished.

Paul walked home, his wide Persian lamb collar turned up about his ears, a cigarette dangling from his lips. The Scotch whiskey in his veins, suffused him with the feeling that all was well with the world; and the sound of his heels, striking the flagstones of the sidewalk, rang out cheerily on the frosty, still winter air.

He thought of his wife and frowned, then he thought of Miss Skeyne and smiled. "Well, it turned out a pleasant evening, after all," he reflected. "That Skeyne trick was certainly amusing. I'll have to look her up again sometime," and he fell to humming a little song.

CHAPTER XXIV

FATHERS AND CHILDREN

Carl Wildmerding III walked slowly up and down his long library, his head sunk, his hands clasped behind him. Each time that he reached the east end of the room, he stopped momentarily, as if to peer through the lace curtains at the crowded wheeled traffic of a foggy March Fifth avenue. But his eyes, if they caught upon their retinas the images of the misty caravan of the seekers and ministers of pleasure, telegraphed to his brain no report thereof. His whole being was concentrated on the detective agency's report of his eldest son's disgrace and possible exposure.

He took a bible from the bookcase and set himself to memorize three verses from Proverbs. When he had them perfectly, he touched the bell and directed the footman to

show Mr. Carl to the library immediately upon his arrival.

There was a tap at the door, and Carl entered, smiling. "Hello, father," he began, but after seeing the older man's drawn and ashen face he quickly checked himself.

"Be seated, my son," said his father sombrely. I have a grave matter to talk over with you."

Terror, premonitory terror, hastened through the ganglia of the young man, leaving his body weak and his soul afraid. Inexorability seemed to flow from his father toward him, threatening to drown him.

His slender little body sank limp and listless into an armchair. He moistened his lips before he could speak. "Well, father," he said, and his voice trembled and pitched high, "what do you want to see me about?" But he knew the answer before it came back to him in words.

He looked about the great library as if it were a new place. His eyes traced with detached wonder the geometrical designs in the white plaster ceiling, then traveled over the minutely carved chimney piece relieved by panels. He dwelt for an instant upon the

Velasquez, which hung over the mantlepiece. He did not see how anybody could care for dead pictures when such a terrible living thing as was going to happen to him, was going to happen to him. He looked at the old Italian lamps, and wondered why the footman did not come in to light them. It was twilight.

Far away he heard his father's voice. "My son, I realize that what I am going to ask you to do will probably make you unhappy, for a short time at least. But it will be better in the long run. You will see that soon, yourself, if you cannot now." Mr. Wildmerding paused. "As perhaps you know, the thing I wish to discuss—concerns a woman."

"Yes, father," said the young man dully.

"You—must give her up."

"But I can't, father."

The older man was patient. "It will be hard at first. I can appreciate that. I shall even acknowledge that she may be better than the general run of her class. But, my boy, remember what the Bible says, 'For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but

her end is bitter as wormwood and sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.' ''

A tiny ray of hope penetrated Carl's heart. His father didn't understand. He thought Blanche was an ordinary wanton, a mere piece of pretty flesh, who joyously sold it for ornaments to hang upon it. If his father knew that she was a woman, a mother, who had risen out of the mire and who wanted above all things to stay clean, perhaps he would relent.

''Father,'' he said, ''you don't understand about this. She lives as quietly as possible. I am not hurting myself with her. She is different from these New York women, the kind that my friends have, who live for jewels, motors, dresses, and late hours. She's different, father. It's queer to say under the circumstances, but she is a thoroughly good influence in my life. I get peace and calm and a new perspective at Wissacon. I can't give her up. Why it's all in life I live for, all I care for.'' He lowered his voice. ''And you know there is a—little girl, too.''

''I know it all. I have had detectives on the matter. She is better than most of her

class. But that doesn't alter my decision. It merely strengthens it."

"But why?" said his son.

Mr. Wildmerding was losing a little of his kindliness. "Why? I will tell you why. Because it is not decent for you to be living with a woman not your wife, particularly in the manner in which you do it. I am not a Puritan. I understand temptations and the ways of the world. But you are not decent about it. I should be very sorry to think that you could not observe your marriage vows, strictly and to the letter, but nevertheless, if you feel you must amuse yourself, do it like a gentleman, instead of like a common, little, bourgeois French shopkeeper."

"Please explain what you mean by that" demanded Carl.

"I will explain, and in a few words. If a gentleman chooses to indulge himself, he does it like a gentleman. He finds some pretty woman for his left hand, who amuses him for a while, and when he is through, he pays her off and all is done. But he doesn't go out in the country to a love-in-a-cottage existence under an assumed name; he

doesn't allow children to be born to him and he doesn't keep the thing up for four years, with every apparent intention of keeping it up indefinitely. That is not worthy of you, nor of any other gentleman. It shows low tastes of which I am ashamed. And I tell you, my son," Mr. Wildmerding spoke most decisively, "it has got to stop, and stop right away."

"But, father, I don't see how I can leave her. I love her and she has always been square with me."

"That makes it all the worse," said Mr. Wildmerding. "That is just what I have been saying. You put yourself down on a level with her."

"But you ask me to give up the very best in my life."

"Stuff," interrupted the older man. "I ask you to give up the worst and most degrading thing in your life. I am astounded at your attitude. This matter is evidently more serious even than I supposed."

"Serious," answered Carl, his voice shaking, "it is the most serious thing that ever happened to me, or that can happen to me.

It is practically divorce you ask. I feel as a husband to Blanche."

"Well, lots of people have been divorced before, and will be in the future," his father answered.

"Not when they loved each other. There would be nothing unnatural if Anita and I were divorced. She doesn't care a bit for me. She has even told me that she married me for money."

"Pooh! All women say hard things when they are angry. She didn't mean it."

"Yes, she meant it," answered Carl steadily. "And even if she didn't mean it, I don't care for her, any more. I did when I married her, but I stopped. Certain things happened. It's no use going into them. But I can never care for Anita again, nor she for me. It all happened before I met Blanche, so don't lay that sin on her soul, too."

"There is no use discussing the matter, further," said Mr. Wildmerding coldly. "This affair must be broken off at once. You are never to see her again. That is final."

The young man sprang out of his chair.

His eyes were flashing. He shook his forefinger. "And what, if I tell you that I refuse to obey? I am a grown man, thirty-two years old. What if I choose to govern myself and my own affairs?"

Carl Wildmerding III was very stern as he said, "In that case, you will never cross my threshold again. Your brother Arthur will become the head of the house. He will inherit the fortune. You will get not one cent."

"You gave me half a million when I was twenty-one. I could live on that."

"Yes, you could live on it. But not in the way you have been living. No Newport, no Capuan, no racehorses, no position either in London or here. You'd live and die a failure, and after a short while, when you had grown tired of this strumpet of yours, and her brat, you'd be very sorry for what you had thrown away."

"But that is not just," Carl pleaded. "Arthur is the same. He's only eighteen, and yet everybody in town knows he is spending lots of money on Eloise Muret, that French chanteuse at Koster's, who is thirty-five if she is a day."

"Enough of this; and shame for tattling. I know all about Arthur, as well as all about you. I am a careful father. He is sowing a few wild oats, like most other young fellows. But his case is not one-tenth, not one-hundredth as serious as yours. However, there is no more to be said. Tomorrow morning before ten o'clock, you may let me know whether you prefer that woman and the half million dollars which you now have, or to give her up, lead a life of decency and fill the position which I had destined for you, as head of the House of Wildmerding, with a fortune of from sixty to seventy-five millions, and a foremost place on both sides of the Atlantic. If you care to throw up your inheritance for a rather cheap—er—romance, be assured Arthur will not regret it. That is all, my boy." Carl III laid his hand on the shoulder of Carl IV. "Consider carefully, and decide wisely."

The constant passage of a phantom procession kept Carl from sleeping that night. He saw Blanche bending over her tulips in the early summer; he saw his father, thin lipped and relentless, sitting in his great library, frowning; he saw the vacuous face of his

young brother Arthur mock him, then turn away to look level-eyed and as an equal into the faces of a Russian grand duke and a German princeling; he saw Blanche dressed all in black, like a widow, rocking a baby to sleep in an alien town; he saw Arthur sitting stupidly silent at a Board meeting of the Directors of the Southeastern road; he felt Anita's patrician, scornful smile wither him, while beside her stood the shadowy figure of Alaire; he saw contemptuous pity in the faces of the men at the club. And when he had seen all these things, the weary round began again. Unceasingly they passed before him, hour after hour.

At eight, he rang for his breakfast. His mind was not made up. At ten he knocked on the door to his father's study.

His father looked gravely at him. "What is your decision, my son?"

"To do as you ask—God forgive me," sobbed Carl.

"Ah, my boy, my boy, I am very happy. Come, everything will be well. We shall take a trip abroad on the Capuan. Just you and I. The sea air will do us both good."

"Whatever you say, father," answered

Carl, breaking. "Nothing matters much, any more."

"Oh, we'll change all that. Now, a word more about this disagreeable subject, and then it will be forgotten forever between us. I'll have Harrison draw up proper papers, and go there and have the young woman sign them. That will be a release against any future action she might bring."

"You don't know her," said Carl in monotone. "She won't bring any action."

"To be sure, to be sure, I don't know her, my dear boy. But still it's as well to be on the safe side. Of course we'll make her comfortable. Don't think I want to injure her. I bear her no malice."

"Why should you?" said Carl in his deathlike monotone. "She is the one to bear malice. But she won't. Oh, you don't know her, father—you don't know her."

He listlessly fingered a paper-weight. His shoulders seemed very bent that morning. "One favor—may I ask it?"

"Certainly."

"Would you not let Paul Potter take the papers down for her to sign? He knows her, and would be kinder to her than a lawyer. I

would like him to go. I want him—to say good-bye for me, since you won't let me do even that myself." A deep sob shook him.

"Yes, yes, he can go. It is not safe for you to go; that is the only reason I object. I will send for young Potter to come up here this afternoon to talk the matter over."

CHAPTER XXV

THE CONSERVATION OF A RAILROAD

Carl Wildmerding III walked briskly up and down his long library, his head thrown up. He was happy. He had saved his son, and the salvation had come in the way he had planned it to come.

"Sit down," said Mr. Wildmerding very cordially to Paul, after the footman had announced him. "I have summoned you to ask your assistance in a delicate and painful situation, and, believe me, I shall consider myself in your debt if you can give us your best thought and—ah—effort in the matter."

After telling the story of Wissacon and Carl's promise to break from his entanglement, Mr. Wildmerding continued: "And it is Carl's especial wish that you should undertake the somewhat disagreeable mission of informing the young woman of his unaltera-

ble determination to sever all relations between them. It is important, Paul, that she should understand the affair is definitely and completely over, by Carl's own wish and determination. Otherwise, she might seek, perhaps, to entangle him again. Now, of course I expect to do the reasonable thing. It appears—ah—in fact, my detectives have informed me that she has lived a quiet life during the continuance of this liaison (though I, out of discretion, did not dwell on this fact in my conversation with my son); and, besides, they seem unfortunately to have supplied an—ah—hostage to fortune. I do not wish her to suffer want in the future. I should even be willing to settle as much as $5,000 a year upon her for the remainder of her life, for a complete release; but—ah—if you could induce her to consent to a more modest arrangement, of course I should be glad." Mr. Wildmerding showed Paul the papers which Blanche was to sign, explaining their intent. "Remember," he concluded, "you must be firm, very firm."

Paul took the train for Wissacon that evening, arriving shortly before supper at the Chester house. Blanche opened the door for

him. "Why, Mr. Potter," she said, "this is truly an unexpected pleasure." When she saw his face in the light, it frightened her. "I hope there is no bad news—from Carl—or Sylvia?"

"Yes," said he, "bad news, I am afraid, Mrs. Chester. And, believe me, I dislike extremely the task of being the bearer of evil tidings. But I——"

"Never mind that," she interrupted. "What is it? Is it Carl? Oh, do tell me quickly."

He disliked her habit of interrupting. He remembered that she had been similarly ill-mannered when he had visited the house before. "Yes, it is Carl. The truth is——"

"Is he sick? Is he dead?"

"No."

"What then? Why don't you tell me?"

"He has sent me here to give you a message."

"A message?" she gasped. "Why, that is strange. He never sent any person here with a message before. What message?"

The man hesitated, as an executioner might, then the knife flashed down.

"He asked me to tell you that all is over

between you, and that he will never see you again."

The woman steadied herself by placing her hand upon the corner of the mantelpiece. "Oh!" she said, "oh!"

"It was something he has been thinking of for a long time," lied Paul.

She did not hear him. "But why?" she said, "why?"

"He did not inform me as to his reason. But he was most definite about it. He said that the liaison must terminate, that it must come to a final period."

"Did he call it that?" asked the woman. "Did he call it—liaison?"

"I am rather quoting to you the substance of his decision than the exact language in which he couched it. But he is willing to do the fair thing, within reason. Of course his father doesn't know about it, so whatever settlement he makes must come out of his own private income. Now what, Mrs. Chester, would you consider fair? What are your expenses here?"

"Oh, I don't know. What does it matter? Mr. Potter—for God's sake, tell me why?

There is some horrible mistake. There must be. If I could only see him."

"I am afraid that is impossible," said Paul. "He cannot see you again."

"But it's all a mistake—all a horrible mistake."

Paul fortified himself with the memory of Mr. Wildmerding's injunction to firmness. "Pardon me, ah—Mrs. Chester. There is no mistake. My friend, Carl Wildmerding, knows exactly what he is doing. His decision in this matter is final and irrevocable."

The woman remained mute for a long time, then almost inaudibly asked, "Tell me one thing, is there another woman?"

"That I—ah—that I really do not know."

"Oh, very well, then," said the woman wearily. "If that is the case, that is the case. So, let's arrange matters. What is it you want me to sign?"

"These papers. They release him from all future responsibility or obligation, on account of his life with you. Of course, as I say, he is willing to pay——"

"Oh, never mind rubbing it in. Where do I sign? Here? All right." She wrote her signature, "Blanche Nevins, sometimes

known as Blanche Chester," at the bottom of each of the triplicate copies of the release papers. Paul called in the maidservant for a witness, requiring her signature also.

He smiled. "You are not much of a business woman, I am afraid, Mrs. Chester," he said, not unkindly. "You signed before the consideration had been inserted, leaving it blank. It might be filled in by me, for instance, at a very low figure. But of course I would not think of doing such a thing. Now, in view of what you have meant to him, and in view of your—ah—child, he is anxious to do the square thing. What do you think you should receive as an annuity? What are your present expenses? You must think of your child, you know."

"My expenses here are under twelve hundred dollars a year."

"Then would fifteen hundred dollars a year, settled on you during your lifetime, strike you as fair?"

"Yes," said Blanche.

"Well, then it is arranged, on condition that you leave Wissacon—in fact, this part of the country. You would not object to doing that?"

"Leave Wissacon? Why, this is my home. It is the only home I have. Why might I not live here as a widow? How can that harm anybody? I have my friends here. I don't want to leave Wissacon."

"But that is part of the stipulation in this paper—that you shall do so. Otherwise, there might be considerable difficulty about the settlement."

"Now, look here, Potter," said Blanche. "I am not going to be run over any more. I suppose I was a bit soft at the beginning, when you first came in. Now I am getting hard again, as I used to be, as a lonesome woman has to be. I will not leave Wissacon unless twenty-five hundred dollars a year is settled on me. Why should he drive me away—for another woman?"

"But the papers stipulate——"

"I don't care a hurrah. I won't leave here for less than twenty-five hundred a year. Go back, you jackal, and report that."

"Very well," said Paul. "Twenty-five hundred, then. And you leave at once. That's understood, isn't it?"

She stared out of the window at the light

snow eddying fantastically under the changing caprice of the March wind.

"Twenty-five hundred, then, and you go at once. That's understood?" he repeated.

"Oh, yes," she said, "that's understood."

"Thank you. Good-bye, Mrs. Chester. You are courageous, and a good woman. Will you shake hands with me?"

She extended her hand. "Yes, courageous and good, perhaps, but a woman, surely. Jesus, pity women. Poor things, poor things. The world is hard for us women. That little child upstairs will be a woman some day. Poor child. And the other baby, the one that is coming—all that can carry me through for the next few months will be the hope that it is not a girl."

"Another child?" said Paul, truly compassionate. "Is there to be another?"

"Yes; even Carl doesn't know it yet. Tell him. And tell him to pray—if he ever prays—that it may be a boy, for its own sake."

The doorbell rang. There was a telegram. Blanche opened it. She read it. "Oh, thank God, thank God, thank God," she said. "It is from him. Everything is all right. There

is no other woman." She sank on the wide lounge, and began to cry happily.

Paul was frightened. "May I see it?" he asked. She handed him the yellow paper:

"Mrs. C. Chester, Wissacon, N. Y.

"Paul delivers message with my knowledge. Thing forced on me by family. Greatest sorrow of my life. Love you always and forever. Good-bye. God bless you. C."

Paul reported his success to Mr. Wildmerding the same evening. "Thank you, thank you, indeed," said the multimillionaire. "You have put me under a real obligation. It is—ah—unfortunate, the—ah—fact of the anticipated new arrival. But perhaps, in years to come, we can do something in a quiet way towards helping him to a good technical education—if it turns out to be a boy. They are my grandchildren, aren't they?"

The grandfather meditated. Then, "I am pleased with the way you have handled this matter. Perhaps my gratitude may take a substantial form, the next time that I have active business. In fact, may I rely upon your confidence?"

"Absolutely, sir," answered Paul promptly.

"I will break a lifelong rule and give you a little information about a contemplated movement in—but I have your word of honor as a gentleman that nobody, not your partners, not your wife, not Carl, no one, shall ever know? Also, of course, that you will not sell the stock which I shall name to you under the figure which I shall fix."

"Certainly, sir."

"Roanoke, common, now at 27, will probably be put above 40 within thirty days. In fact, the thing is as sure as we can be of anything of a cognate nature. Of course you must not sell a share under 40, or the workings of the pool, strong as it is, will be hampered."

Paul gave his hand to Mr. Wildmerding. "You may count on my discretion and promise absolutely. And I appreciate the great compliment that you have paid me in taking me into your confidence. Thank you very much, sir."

Paul left the library, beaming with happiness for the important "tip" which he had received. He turned his steps to Carl, who

was waiting for him in the upstairs smoking room.

Carl sat huddled upon the broad divan, a sad and broken little millionaire, while Paul told him much of what had happened at Wissacon.

The tears rained down his face when he heard of his unborn child.

"God knows how I ever did it," he cried, his frail body shaking and shivering under the force of his sobs. "God knows how I ever could do it."

Paul put his arm about his friend's shoulder, and when the violence of his feeling was nearly spent, said, "You did the right thing, old man. It was hard; it took pluck, but, after all, you did your duty. You kept the Southeastern railroad in your branch of the family—that was your duty," urged Paul, "and that's what counts."

"Oh, yes," said Carl wearily, "I suppose so."

CHAPTER XXVI

A PATRON OF THE ARTS

Within the month Paul quietly bought much Roanoke common and then quietly sold it again, gaining $54,000.

"I have had good luck lately, Muriel," he said to his wife. "I've made nearly fifty thousand on Roanoke."

She smiled happily, with pleasure. "However did you do it, dear?"

"Oh, your husband isn't such an old duffer as you thought," said he, kissing her.

"Now I think we can certainly take the Suchers' cottage at Newport for June, July and August. They are going abroad for the summer. I have been talking with Sarah Suchers about it."

"You have? What made you think we could afford it?"

"Oh, I didn't say anything definite. But

it's lucky I have been thinking about it. Isn't it nice we shan't have to camp around this summer? I think I'll call up Sarah and tell her now. She wanted to hear as soon as possible."

"It's a rum business, this business of life," mused Paul as he heard his wife's high heels click-click rapidly over the hardwood floor towards the downstairs telephone. "Here I pack that Blanche woman and her kids out west, with the consequence that Muriel spends the summer in Newport." He touched the electric bell. "Bring me a Scotch and soda, please," said he.

Far down the hall and coming nearer he heard his wife's gay soprano trilling the ditty with which Eloise Muret, the French chanteuse, had created the music hall furore of the winter. "Ne faites pas ca—ici." The success of the ballade hung upon the facial, dorsal and torsal contortions with which Mlle. Muret illumined words so simple in themselves that one child might have said them to another. Muriel had been a frequent attendant at the music hall where La Muret held forth, and had learned to imitate her rather passably well. Often now, toward

the end of supper parties, Muriel was called upon for "Ne faites pas ca—ici." Invariably she was rewarded by a storm of applause from all the men present, except Paul, whose enthusiasm for the chanson had cooled.

"I wish you'd get a new song," he grumbled, as she threw the door of the smoking room open. "You've been singing that all winter."

"Is my little Pauline jealous?" she said, humming the refrain, "Quelqu'un sera faché."

"Jealous? What rot! I'm sick of it, that's all. And I wish you'd cut it out."

"We've got the Suchers' house. Eighteen thousand for three months."

"Well, they don't want much," answered Paul. "An old brick house in the old part of town. That's outrageous. Why did you let them hold you up like that?"

"Please stop complaining about everything I do, especially about money. Didn't you make a nice little thing just now?"

"I didn't expect you'd turn right around and hand it to the Suchers."

"For heaven's sake, stop bickering, and talk seriously for a moment. The Suchers

house is a real inspiration. They belong to the old-fashioned set, that pays lots of attention to family and aren't intimate with the new rich. Now, that's what we'll have to do, after this. I can say I'm sick of the continual going out, and that we want a simpler, more wholesome life. Being in the Suchers' house will help, too. We can maintain a good position of that sort with our money.

"Well," smiled Paul, "I'm not exactly what you would call old family."

"Oh, that makes no difference. Lots of members of the old family set aren't really old family, but they can't afford the other —that's all. There won't be any trouble if we give nice parties. Besides, I am old family."

"Sounds like a pious scheme, then, for we can't nick with the gaudy spenders much longer."

"Old family in Newport during the summer, and rather elevated bohemianism here in town in the winter," she continued. "Artistic and intellectual, and all that kind of thing, you know. We could have a salon for painters, musicians, poets and literary people generally—actors and artists and war

correspondents and explorers and—ah, let's see—inventors and that sort of people."

Paul laughed. "More economical, certainly, but I'm blessed if I know where you're going to get the explorers and inventors. We might corral the others, in time."

"The supper tonight will be like that. It will do for a beginning."

"What inventors and explorers are coming?" grinned he.

"Anita and the Alaires and Katharine Ellis and Darlington, the Philadelphia Turnvelts, the Blites, the Favereux girls, and they'll probably bring a couple of new young men from San Francisco or Sioux City. I don't see how they *meet* these Western Croesuses in the first place, and Billy Dunbar——"

"Oh, I say, Muriel, that will hardly do. Billy's quite beyond the pale."

"He is? I didn't know he was *quite* beyond. Anyway, this is to be a bohemian party, so it won't matter."

"Isn't Jim Ellis coming?"

Muriel directed a quickly suspicious glance at her husband. "Oh, yes, I forgot him."

"Hmm! I can't see anything particu-

larly bohemian about that agglomeration. It sounds like the same old gang."

"Oh, but wait till I tell you. Lamort, the new Frenchman whose posters are so frightfully Beardsleyesque, and who writes most eerie verses under each one in mixed French and English, is coming, and he's bound to say something fearful and amusing—he always does."

"I know all about him; he's a disgusting whelp. Between Helen Alaire, who's usually so inspired with morphia that she can do nothing but stare about, and Dunbar and Lamort, it won't be a very healthy place. I keep myself in pretty fit condition the year around, and I don't care for decay. I don't think I shall come to your party."

"Don't be ridiculous, Paul. Of course you'll come. I can arrange to keep Billy Dunbar away, but as to Lamort—everybody has him. Besides, we are to have a really wonderful person—Castleman, the new actress, who does Ibsen so divinely. I didn't really think she'd come when I asked her. Several other women have tried to get her, without success—but she accepted me promptly. I know Katherine Ellis has asked

her two or three times to her artistic affairs, but the woman never went. So this will be really rather a feather in my cap."

"Castleman, the *California* actress? Are you sure she's from California?"

"Yes, I am sure," answered Muriel. "California, or Colorado, or some such place. Maybe it was Manitoba; I don't remember. Anyway, she has never been east before, somebody said so yesterday at lunch. She learned about Ibsen out there—fancy that. It's really very remarkable."

Paul laughed. "Remarkable that the bear should dance at all, eh? But what theater is she playing? Is she having much success? I haven't seen her name on the playbills."

"Oh, she's the very newest thing. Katherine Ellis and Darlington and their set started the fad, and this week ever so many people have motored up there, and then we take tea in a little frumpy café right near the theatre. It must be making its fortune. But of course as soon as it is known that we go there, everybody else will begin to go, and that will spoil everything."

"You say she acts well—very well?" Paul inquired.

"My dear, she's divine—really. Darlington says she's a true artiste. Dresses hideously, however; I suppose that's in the play, though. She lives with Frawly."

"What?" ejaculated Paul.

"Oh, yes. He found her out west somewhere, as a rough diamond. She'd been unhappily married and was separated from her husband. She made her living, nominally anyway, by giving small concerts and singing in church choirs. When Frawly was playing in Denver last year he happened to drop into a Sunday concert where she appeared. He was attracted by her at once. She has a wonderful figure, tall yet very supple, with great black eyes—Enfin——" Muriel shrugged her shoulders in explanation.

"Enfin what?" asked Paul shortly.

"Why, what you'd expect from people of their class. And now he has rented this little theatre up in Harlem, to keep his promise, I suppose, with the understanding that if she does well he is to give her a chance next year in one of the New York theatres."

A vague, undefined, formless, mordant suspicion seized suddenly on his mind. Muriel's misinformation seemed complete on every

point and in every particular. But after all, hidden away in her grotesque fabric of error might there not be lodged a single strand of truth? He wondered.

Why, indeed, should Frawly, lover of pretty women that he was, have rented the little theatre in Harlem for Sylvia? The ugly thought persisted and recurred, until finally he asked, in a strained monotone, "What makes you think she is Frawly's mistress?"

Muriel laughed. "The case is plain enough, I think. They're all alike, these actors, actresses and professional singers."

"You are a little unjust, I think."

"Nonsense!"

"But aside from that," he continued, "is she succeeding? Will Frawly bring her downtown next year?"

"Probably not. He told Jim Ellis that she's not drawing well, although Frawly himself thinks she's very good. The papers speak well of her, but of course the hoi polloi won't pay to see Ibsen and that sort of thing, which is all she is doing. As a matter of fact, I don't suppose that she's up to really strong plays that call for a strong emotional act-

ress. She's not even paying expenses now, and Katherine Ellis is talking of getting up a subscription for her. I have put our names down for twenty dollars. Cultivated people ought to encourage serious purpose in the drama, I think; don't you?"

"Certainly," he assented; "but how is your lioness to get here—on the elevated?"

"Oh, I hadn't thought—we might send the motor for her."

"Good idea. I'll drive up myself. I need the air."

Muriel shrugged her shoulders. "You need the air?" said she, smiling. "Very well. The Harlem Hall of the Muses is the name. Be sure you are on time."

"I'll be on time," answered Paul, smiling also.

CHAPTER XXVII

SENTIMENTALIZING

Paul drove his car into the narrow alley which bordered the Harlem Hall of the Muses. He did not shut off the engine, but left it coughing quietly and regularly. He scratched a few words on a visiting card, "Am waiting for you at stage entrance with motor. Paul," and handed it to the doorkeeper. "For Miss Castleman. When will she be out?"

"In ten or fifteen minutes, sir. Thank you, sir."

Paul glanced at his watch, then lit a cigarette. He strolled up and down before the door, looking each time he passed, inquisitively up the flight of painted white wooden steps that led to "behind the scenes."

He opened his watch again. Only three minutes had passed. Plainly he was nervous.

Sentimentalizing

She was the woman whom he had come nearest to loving in all his life. He never could forget her. He never wanted to forget her. It was odd, too, that it was Muriel who, at the Yale Prom, had caused the quarrel between them. It had been ten years since he had seen her. And now, after this long time of absence and silence, a wave of feeling seemed to be overcoming him again.

The soft, damp, warm April breeze stirred restlessly over him. Yes, he might as well face the facts. He had been mistaken in Muriel. She was not a helpful wife. She was not the sort of woman he had supposed her. She had talked so wondrously, so sympathetically, so comprehendingly of the communion of spirits and the higher understanding between souls, when they had been together on the Capuan; yet since they had been married she had hardly talked of such things at all. She seemed to have a different vocabulary now. And he couldn't forget what Dick Evers had told him about those three other men. She was other men's leavings. If Dick hadn't caught them, there would have been no divorce, and he would still be free.

Eleven minutes had passed. She might

come at any second. Two women already had come out, making their way down the alley to the street, dropping their eyes under the stares of the men who waited under the electric light, to see the actresses in their street dresses. Paul placed the tips of his fingers between his ribs over his heart. "Somebody's been putting on the accelerator here," said he, "and here is the girl who did it."

Sylvia stepped into the muddy alley. Beside her was a thin, elderly man with gray hair, heavy nose and long chin. Both were smiling. Paul advanced, hat in hand, "How do you do?" said he.

"How do you do, Paul?" Each looked quickly at the other, to observe the changes of a decade. She seemed full ten years older, perhaps fifteen older, than when he had last seen her. She showed greater maturity, womanliness of body; and her face, instead of being a prophecy, was a fulfillment. It was a face that had been written upon.

She saw him less slimly graceful, stronger, more comfortable looking. His face was shrewder and sharper and harder. His jowls were the triflest bit heavier; veins showed here and there; but his eyes were as clear, his

teeth as shiny white, his shoulders as broad, and his back as straight as in the days of his youth.

"Mr. Leamington—Mr. Potter."

"How do you do, Mr. Leamington? I have heard much of you."

"People used to hear of me once, in this town. But that was long ago. I should hardly have thought, sir, that so young a man as you seem to be would have known of me. Time washes names off the boards very rapidly."

"Miss Castle is coming to our house for supper. Will you not come, too? There is plenty of room in the motor."

"Thank you kindly, but I fear I cannot. I have much work to do tonight, which I have shirked this first spring afternoon for a walk in Central Park. And, Sylvia, remember to get home in good season. Rehearsal is called for ten tomorrow; and you should be fresher for the professional matinee in the afternoon than you have ever been in your life before. So please, my dear, do not stay late. Tomorrow means a crisis for us."

"Oh, you old jailer!" laughed she, putting her hand on his arm. "I have heard that

warning to be particularly fresh for tomorrow's crisis on an average of once a week ever since I have had the pleasure of your acquaintance and the benefit of your instruction." She swept him a low curtsey, dexterously keeping her blue, accordion-pleated skirt from the mud.

Her face lightened, as he looked into her smiling eyes. "Ah, si la jeunesse savait," he said in mock pathos. "Good-night, then—and *do* get to bed on time."

The car swept southward, straddling the car tracks, and turned into the north end of the park. As the giant vehicle swung powerfully around the studied curves, its long Siamese-twin funnels of light veered from side to side across the macadam road.

Sometimes there was a brief glare in their eyes, the hum of a huge bee, the roar of a waterfall, the laughing sound of women's voices borne backward, as another driver of sixty-in-hand crashed by, seeking his pleasure. Otherwise Central Park was deserted, save for an occasional lonesome policeman.

Sylvia sat silent on the front seat, watching the light from the acetylenes now illuminate, sunlike, the minutest pebbles or the tini-

est puddle in the road ahead of them, now at the curves flee, hiding, into the tangle of bare trees and naked bushes which bordered their path. The gentle wind through which they rushed was warm and moist and fertile, touching them with the spirit of the awakening year.

When the car drew up before the tall stone house, and the obedient explosions of the gasoline ceased, he turned to her. "I had many things to say, but I could not. Thank you for the ride, Sylvia."

She was silent.

"Come," said he, "let us go in where there are lights, and alcohol, and false laughter, and lies. Oh, I am not the one to say this. It was these siren lights and this lying laughter that I sought, and have paid for. Now I know the worthlessness of it—and the cost."

"Hush, Paul," she whispered, her eyes shining. "Let us go in."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BOHEMIANS

More champagne was consumed at Muriel's supper party than is usually vouchsafed to bohemians. When they had finished the meal—the fifth of the day for most of them —her guests moved to the long red library, where shaded lights brought out the gold-tooled backs of a thousand volumes, which, like the people, were editions of luxury, little used.

Muriel came to the actress, and, leaning very close to her, and smiling very graciously, said:

"We hope to have tonight, now that you and two or three other interesting people are with us, something better than our usual dull time with each other. Will you not help us?"

"You mean you want me to sing?"

"Sing or recite—if you would," Muriel ex-

plained. "We rather aim at a certain bohemianism of the better sort, if I may use a sadly overworked phrase. All of us who can are expected to do something. Two or three of the others have parlor tricks," she laughed, "and I have a little French song that I sing."

Across the room Sylvia saw Anita Devereux and Ethel Harrick laughing together; beside her was Katherine Dunbar; before her, smiling falsely as always, was Mrs. Richard Evers. Only their names had been changed—to Wildmerding, Turnvelt, Ellis, Potter—aye, Paul Potter. It was ten years since she had seen those four women, since she had spent three miserably wretched days with them. Though they had quite forgotten her, she had not forgotten them. She never could forget the woman who now stood before her asking a favor.

The actress smiled a negative. "Really," she said, "with your raw April winds, my throat is sore. I don't dare overwork my voice. I am so sorry."

The piano tinkled responsive to Lamort's long fingers; the smoke from a thin Russian cigarette curled spirally into his eyes; he

shook back his yellow hair; and Muriel, standing behind him, slowly drew up her bare shoulders from her green bodice, extended her palms, and began nasally, "Ne faites pas ca—ici."

The people in the room applauded, laughing at the daring of the woman. Lamort threw her an insolent glance and whispered half a sentence in French. None heard what he said except the Favereux girls who were standing by the piano. They giggled, in perfect comprehension.

In the corner farthest from the piano, the drinking, the smoking and the border-edge talk, Sylvia sat with Katherine Ellis and Darlington. Her shyness passed away under their sweet praises; the strangeness wore off between them; the actress in her inexpensive blue dress lost her consciousness of the rich woman's thousand-dollar gown; and they became friends.

For an hour they talked of the stage. Sylvia quickly dominated the conversation by her vaster knowledge, while the other two listened, first with politeness, then with interest, finally with respect.

"Humanity, realism," concluded Sylvia,

LAMORT WHISPERED HALF A SENTENCE IN FRENCH.

with glowing cheeks, "is the future of the drama. Ibsen was the forerunner. Hauptmann, Gorky, Shaw, Sudermann follow him, mighty presagers of a truer day. Romanticism, like other lies, must go."

"This has been to me a breath of freshness in the tired air of an over-perfumed room," sighed Katherine. "If you will allow an odd expression, you have been *useful* to me."

"I am glad if that is so, and this evening has been very useful to me, too," said the actress. "Please tell me, Mrs. Ellis—these are people of the best society in New York, and this is the way they amuse themselves?"

"Yes, they all, except of course that Frenchman, who's only a Lenten crochet, belong to the gay set. And this is their—our usual amusement; something to eat, something to smoke, a great deal to drink, and the throwing together of people, especially married people, who are having flirtations."

Muriel was sitting with Jim Ellis on a low divan in the opposite corner. Elusively she smiled at him; and Katherine saw the flames break out from the eyes of her brother-in-law. "It's only fair to add, however, that

our charming hostess is rather in advance of the times. But the times seem to be hurrying after her."

Sylvia turned again to study the noisy crowd. Instinctively she catalogued in her trained memory, for future bits of business, the saliencies of the pleasure-hunters.

"I see there is another Mime here," she remarked. "Who is he—the sallow young fellow talking so spasmodically to the big, yellow-haired woman in the chaise longue?"

"He—why, what makes you think he is an actor?"

"That's plain," laughed Sylvia. "He was in such a hurry to come to the party that he left his shop without entirely getting his make-up off."

Dead silence followed her remark.

"Who is he?" she repeated.

Katherine answered in a very low tone, her face as pale as snow: "He is not an actor. He is my brother. Oh, why ever did Muriel inv——"

"Watch Dollie Favereux. She's going to do a stunt," interrupted Paul, who had strolled up.

A tall, pale, auburn-haired girl borrowed

a cane from the rich young man from San Francisco, then opposite him danced a semi-can-can. Applause. She sang a couple of English music hall songs which were carried by their tang of suggestiveness, and ended with a whirring skirt dance. Much applause.

"Where's her husband?" asked Sylvia, wickedly. "I want to see if his expression is as bored as a certain other husband's was tonight when his wife was on."

Paul laughed. "She hasn't a husband. She's a girl. Girls are progressive nowadays."

"There wasn't anything especially wicked in what Miss Favereux did," said Darlington. "The badness of her stunt lay in her idea that there was something a little more than daring in it. The same with the onlookers. They think they have seen something rather devilish; that is why they are applauding so determinedly. As poorly done a performance wouldn't last a week on the professional stage. Am I not right, Miss Castleman?"

"You certainly are," laughed Sylvia. "No vaudeville manager that I've ever known,

and I've worked for more than a couple, would put that on."

"It is this same amateurishness in everything," continued Darlington excitedly; "this complete inefficiency that is the dominant note of the lives and characters of our women of fashion. They can't sing, they can't dance, they can't act, they can't paint, they can't sew, they can't cook, they can't educate. They are inept, unthorough, inconsequential, rudderless, compassless, drifting. They don't know life, because they have never lived life. They are like perpetual typhoid fever patients, supported always on rubber water mattresses. Helpless, hapless, hopeless, nervous, disappointed, cloyed and cowardly, they exist a few years here, seeking to have all their living done for them by paid dependents. They delegate all their functions in life save one—and even that they don't do well or often."

Darlington concluded with glowing eyes and looked to Katherine. They were in love with each other in dilute fashion, just as they had been before she sold herself to Lassie Ellis. She wondered why she had seldom

been able to raise him to such vehemence as he had been pouring out for Sylvia.

"And yet," said Katherine, "there must be some strong, resistless fascination under all this superficial, frothy glitter that draws us on. For even we, who in our hearts realize the inanity of the whole thing, yet patiently grind on until our last hours upon this weary, golden treadmill. Can you explain that, Miss Castleman?"

Sylvia dropped her chin into her hand and thought. "I do not believe," she said finally, "that its lure is so compelling because it is strong as because you are weak. But that is not your fault. Life is so ordered for you that you have no chance to be anything but weak."

The party was breaking up. Katherine held out her hand to Sylvia. "Miss Castleman," said she, "I have had a delightful evening because of you. I am not going to ask you to call on me, as I meant to, when first we met. Instead, I wish to ask you whether I may not call on you?"

"Truly, it would give me great pleasure to see you again," smiled Sylvia. "I live at a little family hotel, called the Lonsdale, on

148th street, and perhaps you will not mind if I say that I like you much better than when I first met you, ten years ago."

"Where was that?"

"At the Yale Promenade."

"Were you there? Oh, yes. Why, you went with Paul. That is how you happen to know each other so well. I was wondering. Oh—yes—I remember all about it now. How you have changed!"

"Yes," smiled Sylvia, "I have changed a good deal, I suppose. I had to. But you look hardly a day older. I remember so well that one of the dresses you wore then was of the same style as this—long, white and clinging, like Grecian draperies. And you wore a narrow band of diamonds in your hair, just as now. You reminded me of a picture I had seen of La Belle Dame Sans Merci."

"What a memory you have! Yes, yes, the saddest thing about it all is that I haven't changed. I have more jewels. That is all. Good-night, my dear. I am coming soon."

"Good-night, Mrs. Ellis."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SMILE OF HEDDA GABLER

For the fifth afternoon within the fortnight following the supper party at his house Paul sat in Sylvia's little sitting room in the Lonsdale family hotel, taking tea. They had talked of books, of plays, a little; of her ambitions for the future a great deal. Complainingly he told her of his life; proudly she told him of hers.

They had been happiest in remembering their boy and girl days in Darbeyville. But they did not once speak of the Yale Promenade, of her father's failure, of the breaking of their engagement.

Today Paul sat limply in a low arm chair, his long legs stretched in front of him. His fund of reminiscences seemed to be exhausted, for he spoke hardly a word; but changelessly

he kept his eyes directed upon the dark, mobile, radiant face of the woman.

She told him of her good fortune. "Yes, today, this morning I signed the contract with this very pen. Next season I will be at the head of my own company in Frawly's theater. You don't know what that means —to have your name in electric lights on Broadway. It's a letter of introduction to the world; it's the key to the door of success; it's like making the team at college—you have a chance to play in the big game. It's Opportunity knocking and beckoning. And, by the eternal powers," she spoke almost savagely, "I *will* make good. Nothing shall stop me—nothing, nothing."

"I believe you, Sylvia."

"Oh, but it was narrow! It makes me shiver to think how narrow it was. We did no business the first two weeks; the third we broke even, and the fourth S. R. O. was out every night. If it had been a three weeks' engagement instead of four, where'd I be now—where'd I go? Back over the road I have traveled, I suppose—as a branded failure."

"I am glad you have succeeded."

"It's Leamington. I have talent—yes, that is true. I have a great deal. But he had to drive me to bring it out. I was getting careless and listless, when he took hold of me. And he made me. I am made. I can get on by myself from now on. Leamington's a great artist, and a very devoted, unselfish man."

"Really?"

"What's the matter with you, Paul? You just sit there and mumble monosyllables. You've let me run on for over an hour with nothing but occasional perfunctory interjections."

He took a deep breath, rose from his chair and squared his shoulders. "I can't talk to you. I am going home, now. I am not coming back, either. You are too beautiful. Good-bye." Refusing to look into her eyes, he extended his hand.

"Oh, Paul! Is it that? I am so sorry. Yes, perhaps then it is better for you to go. Good-bye." She spoke gravely.

But when the door closed behind him, she smiled. "Oh, I am so happy!" she said. "I wonder when he will come back?"

That evening he wrote her a long letter to say that he would not see her again. The

next evening he went to the Harlem Hall of the Muses, where the Castleman engagement had been extended for two weeks.

When Sylvia—strong, purposeful Sylvia—came upon the stage, as Hedda, the coward and self-doubter, he wondered at the perfection of her art. The strength of illusion which she was able to throw across the footlights, the rapid genius with which she sketched the ugly uncoilings of a soul so unlike her own, amazed and bewildered him. He watched her through the act with growing fascination, seeing the face and hearing the lines of no other performer.

When the curtain fell, he passed heedless of the bows of people whom he knew, out to the street. He walked slowly toward his waiting motor.

"Do you think you can find a flower store open at this time of night?" he asked his machinist.

"I think so, monsieur."

"Then we'll go there." He bought all the long-stemmed American Beauties in the shop—seven dozen of them—and put them into a huge box. This he handed, with no card, in at the stage door for Miss Castleman.

When the curtain went up on the second act, disclosing Hedda standing before the mirror, loading her pistols, Paul's heart jumped, for a red rose was at her breast. As the actress came toward the audience, smiling her famous slow smile, straight at him, she touched her hand to the flower, as if to adjust it, and smiled again.

Sylvia bowed right, left and center to four curtain calls after the act, but each time her last bow was to him, her sweetest slow smile was into his eyes. "I can't stand this," he muttered to himself, choking. "I am going home. I must go home."

He left the playhouse. "You drive tonight, Duroc," said he. "I don't feel like it. Home, please."

"Yes, monsieur."

The car sped south. As they passed One Hundredth street, the master quickly spoke to the man. "Oh, I've forgotten something. I must go back to the theater. And please hurry."

"Yes, monsieur."

The motor drew up before the stage door in the alley. Paul jumped out. "Is the performance over?" he asked anxiously.

"No, sir, not for half an hour yet."

"Half an hour. Oh, hell!" he said, and fell to striding up and down upon the slippery cobblestones of the alley, frowning in his impatience.

Sylvia was surprised when she found him waiting. "I thought you had gone. Your seat was empty after the second act. And I was just a little bit disappointed."

"Aren't you rather warm?" he said.

"Why," she laughed, "what makes you ask such a funny question?"

"I thought perhaps a drive through the park might cool you off a bit. It would be good for you, you know."

"Well, perhaps I am a little warm. And thank you."

He climbed to the driver's place, took the wheel and motioned to the seat beside him. "Come sit here, Sylvia; there'll be nothing in front of us but space and speed."

As he was throwing in his reverse clutch, to back out of the alley, Leamington, tall, thin and gray, came out of the stage door and stood under its lamp. "Oh, Sylvia, whither away? How do you do, Mr. Potter?"

"Just for a little drive. It's so hot."

Leamington hesitated. He hoped Potter would invite him; because he was jealous and afraid for the woman. He put his foot, as if thoughtlessly, on the step. Paul said nothing. Neither did she.

"Well, good-night, then." The actor walked slowly and very listlessly out of the alley. The motor cut west and found the Riverside Drive.

"Sylvia, I don't know what's going to happen to me," he began suddenly, his eyes straight ahead, "and I don't particularly care. I have this drive tonight, with you beside me. I have made a mistake with my whole life. I am not a very decent fellow. I have done many, many things that haven't been decent. I don't mean merely the ordinary wickednesses. I mean hypocrisy and lying and cheating and cajoling. My whole life since I came here, since we knew each other in Darbeyville, has been a lie. My smiles have been lies, my handshakes have been lies, my kisses have been lies. I loved you; and I lied to you and to myself, by pretending I did not. I have not loved other

women; but I lied to them and to myself by pretending I did, and here I am now a success, God save the word, a *success* in the eyes of our home people; and the most ghastly failure that ever dragged one weary day after another. But such as I am, mean, petty, trivial, money-worshiping, I belong to you. I may never see you again. But I belong to you. You may not want me. But I belong to you—forever and forever."

She made no answer for a long time. Finally she spoke. "I meant to torture you; I meant to make you pay. It's a weary, long time ago, now; but you were cruel, very cruel once, Paul. You know that?"

"God forgive me, yes, I know it."

"And now when I met you here, and your wife asked me to supper, I went out of curiosity to see you and her together. And, when in driving me to your house, you began to touch the borderland of sentiment, I meant that Cynthia Castleman, the pretty actress, should have revenge for Sylvia Castle, the poor, deluded, wretched girl. You nearly broke her heart, you know. But, in some way, vengeance has lost its zest. I don't

want to make you pay, any more. You seem to have paid already. I wish you well, Paul; I wish you happiness."

"Happiness I can never have now," said he. "I know it can do you no good to tell you; it can do me no good; but I love you. Forever and forever I love you. In this love lies my only chance of salvation, my only hope for cleanness."

Memory surged across the years, and again he took her imagination captive. The trap of delusion, the same cruel trap which in her girlhood had lacerated her, was freshly set before her, ready to be sprung. But, yet untaught, once more she approached it.

"Oh, Paul," she gasped. "Take me home. I don't dare stay any longer."

At the door she said, "Good-night. I have been so happy—and so miserable. It is better that we should not see each other again."

"Once more—and then good-bye."

"Just once more, then."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes—to-morrow."

"I'll come in the motor at ten. We'll go somewhere out in the country, where the violets grow, somewhere away from the dirt and

the noise and the people. We can forget everything, since home. We can be children together again—for the last time."

"Yes—to-morrow—for the last time. Good-night—dear."

CHAPTER XXX

THE APOGEE

They had found a little weather-beaten, long unpainted inn, a relic of coaching days. Now it was in the back water of travel, kept open for habit's sake by its ancient owner. Few passed along the earth turnpike which led by it, choosing instead the new macadam road a mile to the east. That day they were the only guests.

A table was placed for them under newly blossoming apple trees. The warm, lazy breeze of May passed and paused, passed and paused about them, exhorting life.

The sleepy German waiter dozed while they consulted long and gravely as to their order. He brought them white breast of milk-fed chicken, Jersey milk in stone mugs with pewter covers, cottage cheese, and strawberries. They talked of the beauty of the blue sky,

the pink and white apple blossoms, the new green oats in the field beyond—but of themselves never a word.

When the waiter had gone, bowing drowsily, gutterally grateful for his fee, Sylvia rested her elbows upon the white pine table, and looked across straight into Paul's eyes. "Do you really care?"

"More than for anything in the world. Is it fair that because I was a blind and ignorant boy I should be punished for it all my life? Now I am a man; I see clearly; I know you for the woman of women for me—my wonder-woman. They say a man has three love affairs in his life—when he's twenty, when he's thirty, when he's forty. You were my first, you are my second, you will be my third. Tell me this—I want to hear you say it: You did care once, didn't you, Sylvia?"

"You know that."

"Do you think you ever could again?"

"I do care," she whispered. "Oh, don't let us talk about it any more. It is too terrible—and too sweet."

From one side of the old inn the land sloped away into a gentle ravine. Here they sat,

looking upon the abundance of free wild flowers, white triliums and purple shooting stars, scattered thickly under the shade of the declining grove. For many minutes no word passed; then he began solemnly, "Sylvia, I honor and respect you above all women in the world. But even more, I love you—as a man loves a woman."

She looked upon the wild flowers, making no answer. "The woman who bears my name," he went on, pleading, "has meant nothing to me since I have seen you. Do not blame yourself. We had drifted far apart before you came back to me. I cannot say that it was her fault more than mine; but it was all a mistake—a fearful mistake. Everything has been a mistake since you went out of my life."

Still she spoke no word, but her great dark eyes shone with happiness.

"Dearest," he said, "the time will come when we may acknowledge our love, boldly and unashamed, before all the world. That time is not yet now, because of the blunder of a boy. But don't blast everything that's decent in me forever because of the wicked folly of my youth. Even if now before men

we cannot own that we are all in all to each other, perfectly married, yet in the sight of——"

"Oh, don't, don't say that we can be married as truly in the sight of God. So many men have said that," she broke out, half-hysterically.

He frowned. "So many men? What do you mean?"

"Oh, please, dear, don't misunderstand. Many men have made love to me because I was only a player and a pretty woman—fair game for all hunters. So I have learned the knowledge of good and evil, which we free women all must learn. I knew the evil, Paul; that is why I am a woman, instead of a girl or a doll. But the evil never touched me. You believe me, dear, don't you?" she pleaded.

Moodily he kept the silence.

"I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith," she said. "But now—I care."

Slowly he bent toward her. She did not move, but the crimson went rioting over her face. When he had kissed her, she put her arms about his neck and whispered, "Oh, Paul, *my* Paul, it has been so long, so long."

Then quickly she sprang to her feet, saying, "Come, let us walk a little. I must not sit here any longer now."

Slowly they walked back and forth upon the new, tender, bright grass of May under the apple blossoms. "Sylvia," he said, in a voice hoarse and shaking with passion, "once in our lives, only once, we may climb to the mountain top." His eyes were burning, glowing. "After that, and before, we live on the low slopes or in the valley. You are to be the mountain top of my life, its culmination, its summit, its apogee. This is our destiny. And I will have you, heart of my heart, soul of my soul."

She had become suddenly pale, but unshrinkingly and most steadfastly her eyes met his.

"Paul, my answer is yes. I give it unafraid and unashamed; for you are the only man I love, the only man I have ever loved."

She paused and bowed her head and passed her hand over her eyes. Her breath came slowly through her half-opened lips, but she was breathing to the bottom of her lungs. Her lips were dry.

"I have loved you," she said, "for all these

ten years, in spite of my strivings to keep it down, to kill it, to turn it into hate and scorn and contempt for you. But remember, I give you everything. You are to be my whole life, outside of the theater. This is forever —for as long as we both shall live. You will be true, and, dear heart, you will always— respect me?'' Her question looked out from sacrificial eyes.

''On my soul.''

''We must not do this under the blinding spell, but deliberately, with full pre-vision of all that it means. I want time to think over, and rejoice in, what I pay. I must sanctify myself, for this becomes to me as much a sacrament as though we stood before the altar together. To-morrow is our last performance this season. After that I am going away to Europe alone. I have never been in Europe. I shall be back in the second week of August for rehearsals. Until then,'' she said, smiling timidly, ''is the period of our betrothal. And know that while I am away, I shall think of you every hour, every minute, every second while I am awake; that I shall dream of you while I am asleep.''

To the south the smoke of the city put a

mighty blot upon the sky. "Look," said he, pointing to the mark, "there's New York—New York, strong enough to enslave a continent, filthy enough to poison heaven above."

"And yet, Paul," said she, "would you go back to Darbeyville? I wouldn't."

"No, I couldn't now. The virus is in my blood. But often I wish I had never come. If I had not known New York, she could not have robbed me of my faith in men. But now that I know her, I can never forsake her."

He was exalted, dematerialized. His terse city speech deserted him. He spoke in metaphors and figures of vague matters of the soul—subtle sublimities. He saw spread out before him the scroll of his life. He marveled at the trivialities written thereon. The petty chicane to which he had resorted to further his business of gambling became incredible. His constant little quarrels with Muriel were now meaningless. Their depression over not being invited to one house was as pitiable as their exaltation over being invited to some other house. His fawning to the rich revolted him; the lie which had been his whole life sickened him. His envy, ha-

tred and malice for those more fortunate than he, shriveled up. For the first time in many years he felt kindliness toward all other human beings.

Love was arousing his spirit from long, deaf slumber.

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They were delayed at Kingsbridge, and reached the theater at a quarter to eight.

Leamington was waiting in the alley for her. "I was worried when you did not come," said he. "I was afraid something might have happened to you. But I am glad you are perfectly safe." He bowed to Potter, without speaking.

"Oh yes, we were perfectly safe," she said, as he helped her alight from the automobile. She smiled good-bye to Paul, then taking Leamington's arm, entered the theater.

As they climbed the narrow wooden stairs side by side, he said, "You are sure you are perfectly safe, dear?"

She laughed and ran up the steps to her dressing room without answering. She could not lie to him.

CHAPTER XXXI

FRAWLY'S NEWEST CELEBRITY

Paul wished to drive Sylvia to the steamship wharf, on the morning of her sailing, but she refused. "No," she explained, "dear old Leamington has ordered a huge carriage to take me all the way from the hotel to the steamer, and he would be disappointed. I give you so much and this is very little to give him. But come to the boat and say good-bye."

When the porter slammed the carriage door behind them, and the heavy vehicle rumbled slowly east toward the boulevard, the actor sighed, "Ah, well, little girl; this is your Commencement Day. You are going out into the world away from me. Almost I could deliver a Baccalaureate sermon to you, were I not so sad."

She placed her white, smooth hand upon his

veined, bony one. "Dear teacher," she said, "I will never go away from you. We shall always work together. But often I feel like a vampire, drawing my life from you. You have taught me and formed me and made me. And what have I returned to you? This little season, this little six weeks in New York, how wonderful it has been, how wonderful the last half of it has been, when people learned of us and came and understood. But it has not been fair. It was your work, your thought, your spirit which alone made it all possible, which animated anything. And yet you have kept in the background. You gave me the credit and the glory; you made me the star. You should have been the star. I should have supported you, instead of you supporting me. You are the greater artist. You were the soul of it all."

He smiled. "No, dear. I know what you mean; and I thank you. But you are young and strong and growing. I am old and weak and declining. Perhaps it might, of right, have been as you say for this little six weeks. But next year, or the year after, it was bound to be as it is now. I foresaw; that is all. I am but a patched-up man, patched-up by

you, living only for you to be perfected and completely strong, waiting only to give you everything that is possible before I fall apart again. When I have nothing more to offer you, when you have learned all I know, then my usefulness ceases. I vanish. The life-force pushes you up; life decayed will pull me down. It is the law."

The woman wept. "Oh, you mustn't, you shan't talk so. For I love you dearly. You have meant so much to me."

"You love me?" he asked, very gravely.

"I love you—as a daughter loves her father."

He sighed again. "I cannot answer that. I said two years ago that I would never tell you again that I loved you as man loves woman. And I have kept my promise—haven't I, dear?"

She bowed her head in acquiescence.

"But whether I tell you or not—I ask this because you are going away, perhaps forever, from me—you will understand, even in my silence?"

Again she bowed her head.

"Well, that's settled then," he said, with complete change of tone. "Let us talk busi-

ness. Here is an acting edition of L'Ouvrière, with which Frawly has finally decided we are to open. It is a hard play and you have a very hard part. Don't look at it for two weeks. Get a good rest and let-down, before you begin your work again. I have the book all marked up and interlined. I think Suzanne understands, when she sees Frederic and Clotilde together in the first act. The whole character from then on seems weaker to me if she doesn't. But Frawly maintains she doesn't know until she gets the letter. I leave it to you. It's your part—and the play hangs on it. Last year I would have insisted. This year, I can insist on nothing. Next year, if I am still alive, you will do the insisting and I shall have to obey. Sic transit gloria." He looked very old.

So they talked of the theater until the hoofs of the tired livery horses rattled upon the wooden planks of the long wide pier.

Paul was waiting for her with fruit, flowers, books. Frawly, too, was there; and his dexterous press bureau had been already at work, for half a dozen reporters had been sent by their city editors to ask variously whether Herr Hauptmann had asked her to

visit him at his German country place; whether she was going to study the working girls of Paris the better to interpret L'Ouvrière; if she had quarreled with Filon, the author of the play; and if she had been ordered to see Nubermann, the great Viennese heart specialist, before venturing the part of Suzanne.

She started to give amazed, laughing "Noes" to the gentlemen of the press, when Frawly stopped her. "Don't gum the game," he whispered. "These young men swing a big line in our business. Be polite; oh, be devilish polite to them—but mysterious, very mysterious. You won't fool 'em that way, but it'll make better stories for 'em, and they'll treat you right." He chuckled. "And when six of 'em come down to the boat to transcribe your final adieus before embarkation, you can bet your foot's on the ladder. I expect you'll be taking a company over to the other side before long."

She was able to see Paul alone for but a minute. When the cry rang out, "All ashore that's not going aboard," she whispered "Good-bye, dear heart; write often; I am coming back soon."

CHAPTER XXXII

IN THE GAY SET

With the blue water rolling between them, Paul gradually came back to himself. He had climbed to the mountain top, but he could not dwell there. Reluctantly he descended, turning often to look back at the slowly receding summit of his life.

The fever of the game of the street prevailed over the other fever which had burned through him. His being became centered as before in the shouts of the croupiers, the pleadings of the cappers, the simplicity of the players and the whirrings of the wheel of Monte Carlo's elder brother.

When by chance he spied two or three of the master gamblers nodding heads in a corner, he sidled near in the ever fresh hope that he might discover which of the new silver faro boxes recently set up in the domed

and gilded hall was theirs, and with what latest device it had been braced to deal for them; so that as they fleeced the vast country-wide mob of dollars, he might cull of their careless leavings a few stray pennies. For Muriel, at Newport, asked many pennies.

He spent most of his time in New York, living at his club. Every other week he joined his wife at the summer playground of the rich, staying Saturday and Sunday.

He had learned that it availed him nothing to urge economy on her. He wrung all that he could from the hopes of those who wanted to get rich without work; and of his winnings he sent to Muriel all that he could spare. But she always anticipated his remittances and overspent his winnings in advance. Debt became his roommate, and with steady sneering menace kept him hollow-eyed and fretful through the hot summer.

Wearied out with a week's bad luck, he alighted from the train at Newport one dusty afternoon. He handed his trunk check and his portmanteau to the servant who met him; then, for the sake of the fresh ocean air, walked slowly, his hat in his hand, toward his temporary, extravagant summer home. Grey

had come into his hair, elasticity was leaving his step, the lines in his face were deep. As the gaudy dragon-fly people flashed by him in motor cars, or behind sleek horses, he bowed to them, listlessly.

He entered the darkened hall of the Suchers' house and made his way to the grassed terrace behind, where he found his wife slowly fanning herself with a great peacock fan, indolently smiling, her eyes half closed, her little white canvas shoes crossed on the foot of the long chair in which she was reclining. Leaning forward toward her, his elbows on his knees, was Jim Ellis. Two tall frosted silver tumblers topped with green leaves of mint stood between them on a low brass Turkish table.

"Hello, Paul," said Muriel, cheerfully, but without moving from her comfortable position. "Isn't it frightfully hot?"

"Hello; hello, Jim." he replied. "I'm fearfully tired. I think I'll lie down for an hour. Please don't let me be disturbed. Everything all right?"

"Yes. We dine at Wildmerding's tonight."

When the dinner was over the guests sat

down to bridge. Paul was cut out for the first rubber, and as he stood behind the Blite-Favereux-Ellis table watching the play, Carl touched him on the elbow: "Come, old man; let's go out." They went to the huge stone open-room, which ran half the length of the house on the ground floor, overlooking the sea.

They sat together in the low divan swung from the ceiling by Siamese chains, the links in the form of elephants. The lights from their cigars glowed red in the darkness.

Finally Carl broke the silence. "It's getting pretty tiresome. Same old people; same old food and same old booze; same old bridge; same old racket; same old staying up all night; same old horrible, deadly, changeless boredom. I've lost interest. It's all over with me, inside of me. Nothing matters much, anyway; at least nothing around here. I don't even give a damn any longer how much that man Alaire hangs around the house; nor how much people laugh at me for it." He became more animated. "Do you know, I seriously think of chucking it all, everything, and going back to Blanche and marrying her. Anita'd marry Alaire now,

if she could bear to think of losing father's money. We'd all be happier that way. Why not? Sometimes, on the level, I think I will."

"And throw away one of the greatest fortunes in the world? No, my son; you may think of it sometimes, but you'll never do it."

Carl smiled unhappily. "No, I suppose not. I'd like to mighty well, though."

The tall, slender, black-gowned figure of a woman appeared in the lighted doorway, then moved toward the swinging divan where the two men sat. "I thought you boys were out here; so I came to talk to you. I am sick of bridge, and generally blue. Please be agreeable, and cheer me up."

"Hello, Katherine," said Carl, moving over. "Sit down here; there's lots of room. We need cheering up just as much as you. We've been fearfully lugubrious. Let's make this a mourner's bench."

She lit a cigarette, inhaling deeply and exhaling rapidly the first few puffs. "My trouble," she said, "is the same it always has been—poor health. The specialist told me yesterday that I had a distinct diathesis toward neurasthenia, and that it would culminate in an acute form unless I went to the

rest cure again. That will be the third time within two years, and I am getting bored with it. What's the use of dragging along through life a half-invalid? I never had a chance. I was damned before I was born. And do you know," she lowered her voice, "it is only fair to think that about poor Billy. He was born weak and sickly—and queer. Truly, it's a blessing that he went as suddenly and quietly and painlessly as he did, without any dreadful scandal. Billy always had a moral twist. He wasn't responsible."

"Well, by gad!" exclaimed Paul, "this business of nerves is hitting the men just about as badly. I went to Dr. Dunleavy in town the other day, and he said I was on the verge of a smash. I can't hold my hand steady to save my life, and I can't lay it to heredity. Neither can a lot of other wrecks. It's the life—the environment."

"Jolly party we're having," said Carl, grimly. "The truth is that the whole structure is rotten through and through; and it is going to fall—like the House of Usher."

Paul rose with a short laugh, and, taking Katherine Ellis' hands, helped her to her

feet. "We're overdoing the gloom," said he. "Come on, Carl, let's get a drink and cut into a game. What can't be cured must be endured. Here we are—and here we stay until the end of the chapter. So let's make the best of our rest-cures and our money. Everybody else in the country is keen enough to change places with us, anyway."

Two nights later Paul lay in his room at the Handball Club, awake. The hot, exhausted air of the city entering his open window brought with it the noises of New York's night. To his taut nerves, the clang of the trolley gong, the rail-sliding of the suddenly braked car, the hum-m, hum-m of the merged noise of the sidewalk crowds, the clat-clat-clat-clatter of trotting feet upon the hard pavement, the roar of the elevated on Sixth avenue, became so enraging and unforgivable that he suddenly sat up in bed, shaking his fist and pleading piteously. "Oh, can't you keep still; for I've got to sleep; I *must* sleep."

He looked beseechingly toward the window where the noise entered, and there, sitting on the sill, he saw Debt, which, huger and

more menacing than ever, leered and laughed and pointed its finger at him.

He passed his hand over his sweating forehead. "The Lord knows that I don't believe in this stuff," he explained to himself, "but I've got to sleep; I *must* sleep."

He opened three powders, taking a triple dose, and soon fell off into heavy torpor. By and by it seemed to him that far away he heard the faint noise of a cowbell coming nearer, from the woods. His ear could barely distinguish the quiet tinkle-tinkle from the sound of the swaying green leaves above him. Then he awakened with the clattering din of the telephone in his ear. He took down the receiver. "Who is it?"

"This is the New York *Inquirer*," said a bass voice.

"Well, what in Cain do you mean by waking me up?" snarled Paul.

The bass voice said: "We have bad news, Mr. Potter. Have you heard it, as yet?"

"No; what is it? Be quick, you are interrupting my sleep."

"Mrs. Potter was seriously injured while automobiling tonight."

"What do you mean? How seriously?"

"She has been killed—instantly and painlessly."

The receiver shook in Paul's hand. He answered nothing.

"Hello," said the voice.

"Hello."

"Mrs. Potter was—but can you tell us where to locate Mr. Harvey Ellis? We have been unable to locate him as yet."

"Why?"

"Because his son, Mr. James Ellis, was involved in the same accident. His automobile was run into by the Night Express at the Grand Crossing at Second Field, fifteen miles from Newport."

"What happened to him?"

"He was killed," said the bass voice.

"And the other people in the car?"

"There were no others. The—ah—in fact—Mr. Ellis and Mrs. Potter were in his two-seated racing car."

"What time did it happen?"

"About an hour ago, shortly after midnight."

"Good night," said Paul, abruptly.

"Oh, Mr. Potter," said the bass voice. "In view of your near relationship to one

of the parties, we should like to have some statement from you in regard to the sad affair."

"Statement. I have no statement to make."

"But the public," said the deep bass voice, "would naturally expect, would be deeply interested to hear what you——"

Paul hung up the receiver. Then he rang for a boy. "Tell the switchboard downstairs under no circumstances to put anybody, *anybody,* on my wire, until I come down in the morning. And nobody is to knock on my door for any purpose, short of fire in the building. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Paul threw himself back on the bed. Quickly the three powders mastered him again, and he fell off to sleep.

When in the morning he went to the breakfast room, the few men there looked curiously at him, but he nodded curtly to them, discouraging conversation.

The papers carried little else on the first page that July day. With minute detail they were able to spread in their city extra editions the story of the solitary dinner of James

Ellis and Muriel Potter at the Green Gage Inn, at Bellknap, ten miles north of Second Field, on the Automobile Road; how they had consumed four cocktails, three pints of champagne and three cognacs (one enterprising reporter had telegraphed to his paper a copy of the bill for dinner); how, after remaining at the inn until about half past eleven o'clock they had started away in the machine; how they had had tire trouble before reaching Second Field; and finally, how, at that station, Ellis had striven to rush the track, ahead of the oncoming locomotive, in spite of its whistling.

The bodies were brought to New York for interment. Muriel was laid in the ancient burial lot of the Devereux. Jim was the first of his line to rest in the enormous, shining, new, white marble mausoleum of the Ellises.

Paul ordered from his tailor enough black clothes to last him a twelvemonth.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"DIAMONDS AND PEARLS"

"Do not meet me at the dock, dear," Sylvia had written, "for there will be so many other people there to see me. Come to my apartment the evening of the day I land, and we shall be alone."

At nine o'clock Paul's motor drew up west of Fifth avenue, in one of the lower fifties, before the newly finished tall white building where Sylvia had taken her comfortable lodgings for the coming year.

"Shall I wait?" asked the driver.

Paul hesitated for an instant, then answered, "No; good night, Duroc."

"Good night, monsieur."

A pretty, pink-cheeked maid in cap and apron opened the door to his ring. She led him down the narrow hall, to the broad sitting-room which ran across the entire front

of the apartment. "Mr. Potter," she announced, and withdrew.

Sylvia looked at him timidly: "How pale you are," she said, "and drawn and sombre. It was terrible, terrible. No wonder you look ill." But the fire was running through her veins as she spoke her necessary, conventional condolences.

"No, it wasn't what happened, or the way it happened. It was overwork—and for her," he answered, between his shut teeth. "But, dear, I am so glad to be with you again. Now we shall be happy."

She placed her long white arms about his neck, drew his face to hers and kissed him. "I love you. Oh, I love you," she whispered. "At last we shall be together—as it was destined from the beginning. Oh, Paul," she said, "this has been so wonderful a summer for me. I never dreamed before that there was so much beauty in the world. I had never known before anything but bare outlines, colorless drawings, and now I am always surrounded by glorious paintings of richest, royal pigments. I am hearing always the deep, elemental, mighty melody of life. Oh, I cannot explain it," she broke

off helplessly. "Try to understand for me. Life means so much now that I never knew before. It is such a happy thing."

She was very beautiful, as she stood, lithe and supple, before him, in softest clinging mauve, her blue-black hair piled heavily upon her head, the lovelight shining from her glorious dark eyes.

"My woman," he whispered, drawing her to him, "forever and forever."

"Yes, forever and forever, dear," she answered; "and, beloved, I want to go again to those wonderful places I saw this summer. I want to go again with you—on our wedding trip." The rich color leaped to her cheeks.

"Yes, yes, dear," he replied, drawing a chair up for her and walking slowly to the window, his hands in his pockets. "Our wedding trip?" he repeated.

"Yes; and even though it is wicked, I cannot pretend that I am sorry she is dead. I would not have had her die as she did, for your sake; but she came between first of all with her lies and her purrings and her glitter. Now she has given you back to me, to be mine in the face of the world. You don't know

how I have sometimes trembled for the promise I made you. But I never weakened. I would have kept my promise, I always meant to keep it—if there had been no other way. But now, it can be as it ought to be. There shall be nothing to hide, nothing to shame us. We need only wait a little longer."

Still standing by the open window, he lit a cigarette, and stood silently watching the smoke curl out into the night air. "Must we wait?" he asked, slowly.

"You know we must, dear," she said, in surprise. "The world would misunderstand if we were married within a year of her death."

"Oh, the world, the world. I thought you were big enough and brave enough to give not a fig for the world." He turned from the window and faced her.

She looked quickly at him: "I am a good woman, Paul, and I do care for my good name. I promised you what I did, because that seemed the only way. But now there is a cleaner, straighter way, without concealment. Surely, you do not expect me causelessly and wantonly to offend the world where I must always live. Surely, you know I could

not recover the esteem of people if we were to be married now. And neither could you, dear, for a long time."

He frowned. "Marriage!" he exclaimed, "is that necessary? The world that you seem to fear so much will not be shocked if it does not know."

"What do you mean? Not marriage—not marriage—now, when there is no obstacle?"

"Oh, for us," said he, with an attempt at ease, "it would seem rather a foolish concession to convention, that would waste much precious time—sweetheart."

"Don't call me that until I know what you mean. What do you mean?" Her face was flaming.

"Surely, that's plain," said he, leaning his elbow upon the mantelpiece and looking at her from half-closed eyes.

The scarlet left her cheeks. She smiled at him. "And so, Paul, you can't bear to think of waiting another long year for me? You want me to live with you now, your wife in the sight of God? The mumbling of a few words over us by priest or parson could neither bind us more eternally nor sanctify with greater holiness our grand passion? It

would be a tenderer, truer union, perhaps more—oh, romantic or whatever you call it—to keep our love a secret from the whole prying outside world? Is that what you think?"

"Yes, dear, really I do. Don't you?" His face was alight with anticipation.

"And there must be more practical reasons, too," she continued, gently. "I suppose that being married to a professional actress would not especially help your—er—social position. Your friends consider actors hardly as equals. Come," she smiled, "it will not hurt my feelings. Tell me, is that not so?"

"In a way, perhaps," he admitted. "It is rather narrow of them, of course. But," he said, to reassure her, "you know better than anyone that I have no such silly notions about you. You are the finest woman I know. I could not even for a second entertain such an idea about you. You are so different from other people of the stage."

"But your society friends who, as you say, generally do have such a feeling about us, might not be able, like you, to discriminate, to single me out from the general run of player-folk with whom I work and travel and

triumph and fail; with whom my life is lived, and will be lived; for even if we were married I should keep on acting. Your society friends might believe that birds of a feather ——?" She broke off, smiling gently at him.

"I am afraid that might be true, dear—to be frank."

"Perhaps," she purred, "you would not be invited to some places where you now go, because they would not invite me? Though they have sometimes asked me as a curiosity, they would hardly accept me on even terms as one of themselves?"

"I am afraid that might be true," he repeated. "And then, consider your own welfare. There is no doubt that marriage removes some of the glamor attaching to a young actress—and I should hate to think that I had interfered even in the remotest way with a career which ought to be so splendid."

"Oh, you needn't mind that," she said. "I don't depend entirely on glamor. There is a little more to me than glamor."

"Really, dearest," he spoke masterfully and decisively, as man should speak to sweet, complaining woman, "you must trust me. I

think the way I propose is much wiser—for both of us."

The debacle of her lifelong illusion was accomplished in that instant. The scarlet rushed back to her cheeks; her nostrils flared; her eyes shot lava terrors at him.

"Let me only thank you for one thing—that I found you out in time——" she began.

"But," stammered Paul; "Sylvia, you—"

"Don't interrupt me, you cur," she thundered. "Hear what I have to say—then go! I know you, at last. It was time. Behind your man's face is the brain of a slavish sycophant; within your athlete's great body is the heart of a cringing, shrinking coward. You talked to me of courage; you, *you,* dared to talk to me of courage, when you have no more bravery in you than the canary in that cage. You talked to me of love. It has been lust you felt." She raised her hands above her, looking up with pitiable eyes. "Ah, God, to think that even in such a leprous soul as his I should have been able to inspire nothing but lust."

"You don't understand," he began.

"Be quiet!" she cried. "You say you fear I might interfere with your social position.

"HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY—THEN GO!"

Social position!" Her words volleyed forth. "What is it you mean, but the chance to go to the garish, vulgar houses of sure-thing gamblers, to guzzle yourself stupid and talk putrid pseudo-sentiment to their empty-pated doll-women? You are a cheap little tout, Potter, whose business in life is to pull in victims for the operators of gigantic confidence games——"

Once more he started to speak, but she raised her hand, furiously, for silence.

"You live uselessly. The world were better without you. You should be swept away, you and those like you." Her deep rushing contralto overwhelmed his interruptions. "You add not one jot of knowledge or wisdom or happiness or wealth or health or virtue to the world, and yet, by the skillful, crooked tricks of your vicious trade, you have filched from it ease, emolument, respect, luxury and power; and you sit above the rest of us, drawing away in your hideous pride, that you may not be contaminated by our touch. Social position! To whom does society owe position? To me, who give it education and recreation and thought and happiness; or to you, who take from it every-

thing you can swindle it out of, and return to it sneers, corruption, evil example, depraved tastes and debased amusement? In the eye of Truth, your social position is incomparably lower than mine. Yet, fool that I was, I stooped to you because I loved you. But now, at last, I know you—the inside of you, you the man," her scorn became immeasurable, "for what you are. This is the end."

She rang the bell. "Give Mr. Potter his hat and show him out," she ordered.

"But Sylvia," he made one last effort, "if you *want,* I will marry you——"

She stretched her rigid arm toward the door. "Oh, you BEAST!" her voice rolled out, "GO!"

When the door closed behind him, she buried her face in her arms.

"Life means so little now. It is such an unhappy thing," she sobbed.

When Paul came into the street, he turned and looked for a long time to the light high above him which shone from Sylvia's windows. "Diamonds and pearls, diamonds and pearls have I thrown away with both my

hands!" he wailed, with the wail of Love o' Women. "And what have I to show for it? Oh, what have I to show for it?"

The dark side street was empty, save for him. "I was a little premature in sending Duroc home," he smiled, bitterly.

"I need whiskey," said he, "lots of it—and I am going to get it."

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHITE NIGHT

On a hot August afternoon, a fortnight before their opening at Frawly's, Sylvia and Leamington walked wearily from rehearsal to a little restaurant on Sixth avenue.

They ordered iced tea, made very strong. "I am so tired, so fearfully tired," she said; "I feel as if it were the end of the season instead of the beginning."

"I have known there was something wrong, but I didn't ask you, because you didn't tell me. You haven't your old time ginger, girlie. And you'll kill the play unless you get it back, for Suzanne is vibrant with strong, passionate life. It's becoming serious, Sylvia. The rest of the company is getting lackadaisical and Frawly is worried to death. He had a long talk with me this morning, and is thinking of trying out Mrs. Harrison. He says you've evidently lost interest."

Sylvia's eyes flashed contemptuously. "He is thinking of trying Mrs. Harrison, is he? What about my contract?"

"Your contract is for the salary, not for the part."

"And so he thinks of trying her—*her?*"

"Yes."

"Well, he *won't,* all the same," she laughed savagely.

"There," exclaimed Leamington; "that's the way—that's it; only light that fire in your eyes at rehearsal for Frawly to see. Don't wait until afterwards to waste it on poor old broken-down Leamington. What's been wrong, anyway? Tell us."

"Oh, nothing about the theater. Something's disappointed me, and I haven't been able to get over it all at once."

"Sylvia, then I am disappointed, too—in you. To think of your risking the opportunity of your lifetime because of some petty private trouble. You know that sort of thing is not done by real people. It's simply not done. The theater comes first always, or else you're no artist."

"You're right, of course," she answered, contritely. "I'll try to buck up after this

—and I will. No understudy for mine. But you look pretty well played out yourself, old man."

He took a sip of his iced tea. "This seems poor stuff to me," he said, slowly twisting his glass around in his fingers. "I don't know how much longer I can stand it. That's the trouble with me."

"Oh, no; not that; not now. Please think, dear, what it means now, just at this moment." Frightened, she laid her hand over his. "Is this horrible thing never to leave you alone? Must it always pursue you?"

The grey of his hair was hardly greyer than the grey of his thin cheeks. "We've come pretty near to the end of Leamington," he said, trying to smile. "Every night twenty beautiful little devils dance on the footboard of my bed, each holding aloft a glass of sweet fire, and imploring, 'Come with us, pour this elixir into your old, flaccid veins and be tonight again a king and a youth.' I can hold on, though, until the first week is over, and you are safe. After that——" he threw his open hands up with a gesture of despair. "The last five years

of my life have been merely a reprieve, which Fate has granted to your constant interceding. In return, I have made you the greatest actor in America—for that is what you are. I may be the only one who says it today, but plenty of others will be saying it soon. Our accounts are squared. I have nothing more to give you; and you have nothing that you can honestly give me. I am but the breakup of a man—but I'll last through the opening week for your sake. Come, let's walk along."

* * * * * *

The great Filon came from Paris to witness the first presentation in English of his mighty drama—L'Ouvrière. From scene to scene the applause grew until it became wildness. Filon, with tears streaming down his cheeks, left his box and sought Sylvia in the wings. "Ah, que tu es magnifique, superbe, ah, que tu es artiste," he sobbed, kissing her on the cheek.

Her cue was given. Smiling forgiveness, she crossed the stage to where Leamington, as Frederic, sat huddled, and touched his shoulder. He turned, started back afraid; then when he saw her smile, slowly hope was

born into his eyes. Not a word was spoken from one to the other. Silent with anxiety, the audience of blasé men and women bent forward. Frederic arose. "My wife," he moaned, placing his arms about her neck. The curtain dropped.

Through the heavy cloth the people on the stage heard the heavy, swelling roar—hand-clappings, foot-stampings, shouts of "Brava, Castleman, bravissima," "Bravo, Leamington," shrill whistlings from the gallery, grew into such a mighty din as never before was heard in that auditorium.

But Sylvia, heedless of it all, as soon as the curtain shut off the audience, jumped back from Leamington's arms and struck him with all her strength full across the mouth. "Drunkard!" she hissed. "Sot!" He sprawled under the blow.

She turned to Frawly. "Go out and tell the house I can't take this call. But I'll be on for the next act. Give 'em any lie you want. Leamington's half drunk, and I've got to take care of him and nurse him through, somehow."

She turned again, fiercely, to Leamington. "You'll do the rest of your dressing for to-

night with me, in my dressing room. You won't get ten feet out of my sight until the show's over. Mr. Jessup," she addressed the stage manager, "have Mr. Leamington's things taken to my dressing room at once; he's started drinking again—tonight of all nights—and it'll take wild horses to stop him now." She drew her dark brows together in a straight, cruel line. "And I am going to be the wild horses," she muttered.

Leamington collapsed when the strain of the first act was over. For alcohol was coming into its own again, after long exile. A doctor was summoned to Sylvia's dressing room, where the actor lay on a couch, his eyes bloodshot, his breath half cut off. Stomach medicines, spirits of ammonia and strychnine were applied.

The next curtain was ten minutes late. Leamington barely got through without stumbling. But Mrs. Harrison as Clotilde outplayed herself, and Sylvia, as Suzanne, was so masterfully sure that the act was saved.

"I am going to marry you tonight," said Sylvia, calmly, as they sat changing for the third.

"Wh-what!" he exclaimed. "Oh, no, it's

too late now. It's hopeless. You must leave me here to rot in my mire."

"I am going to marry you tonight," she reiterated, in monotone. "Whatever you may happen to think about it, Mr. Henry Leamington."

There was a knock at the door. The actress slipped on a dressing sack and said, "Come in." The doctor entered, a small black leather case in his hand. He took out a hypodermic needle. "I think," said he, "that in view of the state of Mr. Leamington's nerves, it will be advisable to administer a little stimulant."

"Stimulant!" shouted the actor, new strength in his voice. "No, I don't need any that you have to offer. I have just received the most wonderful stimulant in the world."

When the performance was ended and the final curtain dropped before the mimic sorrow, the audience sat in silence for a little while before beginning their demonstration.

Then finally, when their applause was finished, they filed out slowly, nodding their heads together, and talking in low earnest tones of the great play, and of Castleman and Leamington, who had deepened and broad-

ened and intensified the two most splendid parts which Filon ever had conceived.

"Come, dear," said Sylvia, when she had finished her dressing for the street. "Let us hurry home—I am so tired. We simply can't take supper with these people who are waiting for us."

They made their way through the crowd of privileged first nighters, critics, actors, managers, singers and writers, who had gathered behind the scenes and half blocked the narrow passage way from the stage to the star's dressing room.

"Gentlemen," said Leamington, "Miss Castleman is not well and I am taking her home. You will excuse her, I beg, from supper, for she is near collapse."

There was quick and kindly sympathy for her. "Oh, too bad, *too bad;* on tonight of all nights." "This is her white night, anyway, headache or no headache," they said. Those who were near pressed her hand as, leaning on Leamington's arm, she made her way to the door.

"The splendid rendering of a nobly drawn character by a true artist," said the famous

impresario. For him she stopped a moment, and held out her hand.

"Thank you, thank you so much," she smiled.

Then the door slammed behind her, and she walked hurriedly up the alley to the street, through the crowd which was collected outside. Some of them cheered and some raised their hats. She kissed her fingers to them, saying, "Thank you, oh, thank you." Leamington bowed to them, happy in her triumph, and happy in his own double triumph.

They entered a carriage and, as it rolled away, she leaned out and threw back a last kiss to the crowd which was still black on the sidewalk before the theater. "Good night, my people—my dear people," she whispered. She put her hands in Leamington's.

"Oh, I am happy," she said.

"Yes," said he, "nights like these make it all seem worth while."

They dismissed their carriage before reaching the Little-Church-around-the-Corner; and after the ceremony walked up Madison avenue in the soft warm September night, to

her apartment. He swung his straw hat in his hand, whistling like a boy, as he walked.

She was the first to awake the next morning. Sadly she looked at the seamed, lined face and the scant grey hair of her husband as he lay beside her, asleep. "Yes," she sighed; "it was the right thing. I can keep him decent a little longer by this—and I owe him that much."

She smiled and gently touched his hand. "And how he did act after I told him I'd marry him. There never was such acting in America. I can never reach that height, and he never can reach it again—not even tonight," she said, wistfully; "no, not even tonight."

But as they sat together at breakfast, reading the reviews of their debut, she found contentment, for every judgment was friendly, from that of the dean of the critical corps, who began: "Not since the days of Adelaide Neilson has there been presented on the American stage such an all-charitable, all-comprehending interpretation of a sad woman's heart as was shown last night by Miss Castleman," to the unrestrained eulogy of the slangy youngest critic, who concluded:

"We lucky ones who were at Frawly's last night will be telling our grandchildren all about it some day."

Leamington pressed her hand to his lips. "You have gone big," said he. "I knew you would."

CHAPTER XXXV

MISS FUNCKE OF ST. LOUIS

It was two years later, and the women of the idle rich were driving, almost for the last time that season, down Fifth avenue and up again, into the Park and out of it. Before another week of May's brightness should have passed, they would be scattered from the city to the mountains, to the sea, to the old world, in ever sought and ever vain endeavor to escape satiety, while yet remaining functionless.

Paul Potter walked correctly up the avenue. Tailor, bootmaker, haberdasher, valet, florist, barber, manicure and masseur had united to turn him out, and he felt that their efforts had not been vain.

The sunshine was in his blood. He held himself very erect and soldierly, as he glanced at his own tall image in the polished

plate glass windows of the ground-floor jewel shops. Sometimes he wondered whether his reflection was not beginning to show a shade more of portliness than dignity required, or at least condoned, in a man of his age. But the sun and the spring made for optimism, so that three windows out of four threw back to him a vision with which he was completely pleased and satisfied.

Sometimes he touched his glossy hat to the bored, silent women who, half reclining in victorias and motor cars, swept by him; sometimes, with fresher interest, he smiled, but did not bow, to one of the pretty manicure girls, just released by the stroke of half past five from behind her screen in the barber shop of some gorgeous caravanserai, where she cleaned and polished the finger nails of him and his kind.

The figure of a woman dressed in grey, walking ahead of him focussed his interest. Her harmony of outline, the sure grace of her movement, made him quicken his steps in curiosity to see her face. Passing, he threw a bold sidelong glance at her.

Mechanically his hand started for the brim of his hat, then paused uncertain in the air,

in fear that his bow should not be welcome. "Sylv—Mrs. Leamington, I did not suppose it was you."

"How do you do, Paul?" she smiled, in perfect kindliness; "are you going my way?"

"How everybody stares at you," was all, after a long pause, that he could find to say. "Such is the penalty of fame."

"No penalty," she answered. "I don't mind, if they don't mean rudeness; and most of them don't. Only a few men are rude, and that is usually here in New York."

They entered the park and took seats on a bench, facing one of the winding pleasure roads.

"Tell me all about it, Paul," she began, quite suddenly. "I am interested. Tell me about yourself."

"Nothing is much changed. I'm better off since Muriel died, making more and spending less. Our firm's one of the recognized, solid houses now, and we're growing. Oh, I'm on Easy Street, at last."

She leaned forward, tracing with the tip of her parasol in the gravel walk. "That was always what you wanted most in the world, wasn't it? I am glad you have had

your wish. And what else about you? How do you amuse yourself?"

Paul drew out his cigarette case, and looked to her interrogatively. "Certainly," she said. He lit a cigarette. "Oh, well, last winter I had some motor-boating at Palm Beach that was rather amusing. Then there's polo and hunting and motoring. I'm fond of sport, you know. This winter I am going to try my new car in the races on Ormond Beach. Probably in February I shall have a fortnight with Carl on the Capuan, in the West Indies."

"You go out a great deal, I suppose—to fashionable dinners and dances and week-ends in the country?"

"Why, yes," said he, surprised; "I go with the very best people in New York. I thought you knew that."

"What a broad accent you have now, Paul," she smiled, but not unkindly. "It would sound very strangely in Darbeyville, wouldn't it? But tell me more. What do you read?"

He reflected. "Well," he explained, "the fact is I have been too busy lately to do much reading, except the newspapers and maga-

zines. However, I expect to get around to it soon and take up something serious. I believe it's improving. Now, tell me about yourself—and your husband. How is he?"

"He is a good man," she said. "He has fought with beasts at Ephesus and conquered them—for me. He is very dear to me." She spoke in a low voice. "And I love him—not with the love of youth, perhaps; for that comes but once; but with the love of wisdom."

After a pause, while the memories raced through him, the man asked: "How is business with you?"

"Splendid. We take the company to London this fall for a year."

"Making much money?"

"Oh, yes; a great deal. And I am glad, for soon I shall have paid off the last of father's debts. Now, I want to know something about your plans."

His throat seemed to go a little dry. He passed his handkerchief over his forehead and carefully threw away his cigarette before answering. "Well, I am going to be married."

"Oh, and to whom?"

"It's not announced yet, so you mustn't tell. Her name is Clara Funcke. She is the only child of August Funcke, the St. Louis brewer."

Sylvia looked straight at him. "Tell me the truth," said she; "are you in love with her?"

He slowly answered, "No; but then, she understands that. I make love to her only in the most conventional way. I will give her what she wants—a New York position; and she will give me what I want—more money. You can't ever have too much of that, you know." He laughed in his embarrassment.

"I am not too sure of that, Paul. But don't you see—don't you know," she exclaimed, "that you can never be happy in that way?"

"Happiness, happiness, what is it? Who has it? All we know is that money can get almost everything for you."

He broke off, then resumed heatedly, as if in dispute. "Happiness lasts only a little while, I tell you. Believe it or not, as you like, but you were the only woman in my life that ever really counted. And I've

known a lot of them. Yet, even if we had been married, our happiness would only have been for a time. Love doesn't last."

"Not your kind, Paul," she said, gently. "But I am glad, too, that it happened as it did. My life has meant more in the theater than it could have meant in the kitchen, the nursery and the parlor of any man on earth."

He was disappointed. "Why, Sylvia," said he, "I always thought you were naturally a womanly woman, who adopted the stage because you were—er——"

"Driven to it?" She smiled, with a tinge of malice. "Broken heart, broken fortune, compelled to act to live, but always deep down in my soul mourned over what I had lost—meaning your noble self? Is that what you thought?"

"Oh, no; not exactly that," he floundered. "So you really believe in art for art's sake?"

"Rather I should say that my art is for people's sakes, to bring them a little more understanding, a little more wisdom and hope and courage. But I know so little yet; and I must know more.

"You must know more about what?"

She smiled. "I don't think you would

understand," she said. "But Paul, look at me and tell me, now that you have achieved your heart's desire, if it has been worth while?"

For a long while he hesitated. "No, Sylvia," he answered, slowly and with reluctance. "It has not been worth while. My whole life is a horrible lie, a poisonous blunder, a soul destroyer. Sometimes I catch a vision of the truth, but always I turn away from it quickly, or I couldn't keep on."

"Why must you keep on?" she cried. "Why don't you turn to the truth, even if you see it only some times? You will see if oftener as you move toward it." For the last time in her life she besought him, with her lips and with her great dark eyes.

He shook his head. "I can't. I know it's all rotten and false, but it's too late to change. I am nearly forty years old. My life is settled; my ways are fixed. It is too late."

She held out her hand to him. "I am afraid you are a quitter, Paul," said she. "Good-bye."

"Yes, I am afraid I am. Good-bye. You

were the only one. There can never be another. Good-bye."

He took her hand, pressed it to his lips, then stood up and walked away from her to the place where his motor waited. He was driven rapidly down the broad, smooth asphalt pavement to his club.

When he was gone from her sight, she arose from the bench where they had been sitting and slowly walked on up the slope, under the green trees of the park.

THE END.

Charming Books
To Own---or To Give Friends

When Good Fellows Get Together

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